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III

P O E M S

OF

WILLIAM SHAKSPERE:

WITH

FACTS CONNECTED WITH HIS LIFE,

ABRIDGED FROM

'WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE: A BIOGRAPHY

—

WILLIAM S ORR AND CO

1 ATERNOSTER ROW

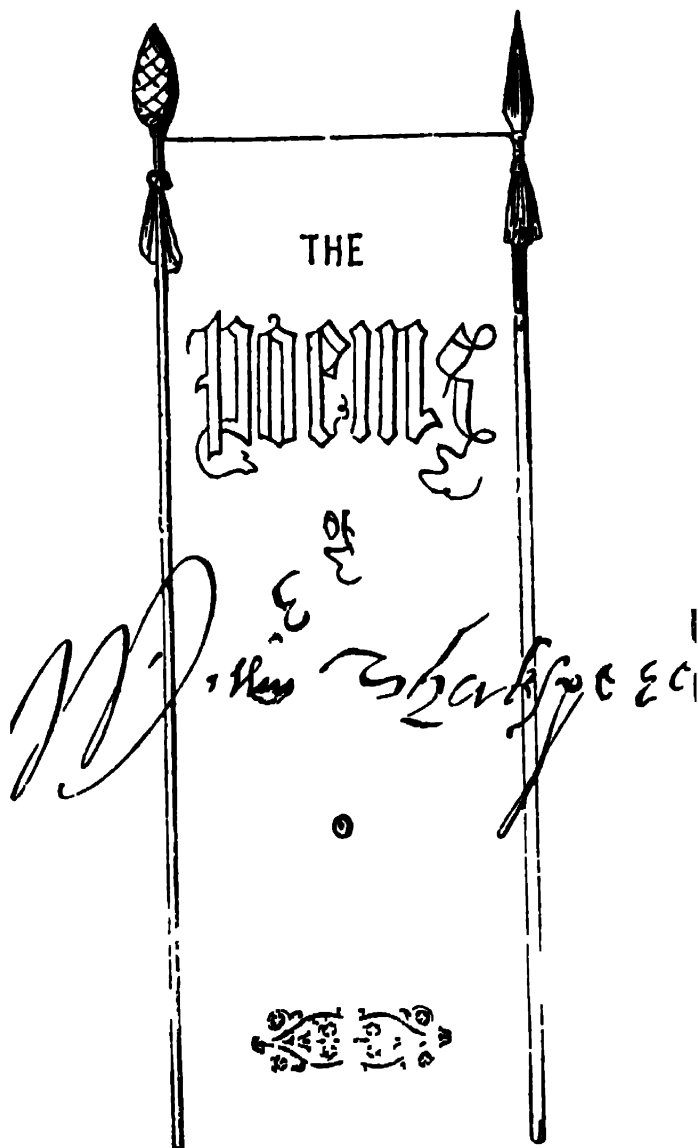
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N O T I C E

THE present edition of the Poems of Shakspeare comprises the VENUS AND ADONIS, THE RAPT OF LUCRECE, THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM, THE LOVER'S COMPLAINT, and the SONNETS. The Songs from the Plays of Shakspeare are necessarily excluded from this edition, it being sufficient for the reader to make a reference to the Dramas to which they respectively belong.





INTRODUCTORY NOTICE TO THE POEMS

'*If the first heat of my invention prove defamed I shall be sorry it had so noble a godfather*.' These are the words which, in relation to the '*Venus and Adonis*,' Shakspeare addressed, in 1593, to the Earl of Southampton. Are we to accept them literally? Was the '*Venus and Adonis*' the first production of Shakspeare's imagination? Or did he put out of his view the drama its performance, which he had then unquestionably produced, in deference to the critical opinions which regarded plays as works not belonging to 'invention'? We think that he used the words in a literal sense. We regard the '*Venus and Adonis*' as the production of a very young man, unimproved, perhaps considerably in the interval between its first composition and its publication, but distinguished by peculiarities which belong to the wild luxuriance of youthful power,—such power, however, as few besides Shakspeare have ever possessed.

A deep thinker and eloquent writer, Julius Charles Hare, thus describes the spirit of self-sacrifice, as applied to poetry:—

'The might of the imagination is manifested by its hurrying forth from the petty creak, where the accidents of birth mould it, into the wide ocean of being,—by its going abroad to the world around, passing into

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whatever it meets with, animating it, and becoming one with it. This complete union and identification of the poet with his poem,—this suppression of his own individual insulated consciousness, with its narrowness of thought and pettiness of feeling,—is what we admire in the great masters of that which for this reason we justly call classical poetry, as representing that which is symbolical and universal, not that which is merely occasional and peculiar. This gives them that majestic calmness which still breathes upon us from the statues of their gods. This invests their works with that lucid transparent atmosphere wherein every form stands out in perfect definiteness and distinctness, only beautified by the distance which idealizes it. This has delivered those works from the casualties of time and space, and has lifted them up like stars into the pure firmament of thought, so that they do not shine on one spot alone, nor fade like earthly flowers, but journey on from clime to clime, shedding the light of beauty on generation after generation. The same quality, amounting to a total extinction of his own selfish being, so that his spirit became a mighty organ through which Nature gave utterance to the full diapason of her notes, is what we wonder at in our own great dramatist, and is the groundwork of all his other powers: for it is only when purged of selfishness that the intellect becomes fitted for receiving the inspirations of genius.*

What Mr. Hare so justly considers as the great moving principle of "classical poetry,"—what he fur-

* 'The Victory of Faith; and other Sermons.' By Julius Charles Hare, M.A. 1840. P. 277.

ther notes as the pre-eminent characteristic of "our own great dramatist,"—is abundantly found in that great dramatist's earliest work. Coleridge was the first to point out this pervading quality in the 'Venus and Adonis;' and he has done this so admirably, that it would be profanation were we to attempt to elucidate the point in any other than his own words:—

"It is throughout as if a superior spirit, more intuitive, more intimately conscious, even than the characters themselves, not only of every outward look and act, but of the flux and reflux of the mind in all its subtlest thoughts and feelings, were placing the whole before our view; him self meanwhile unparticipating in the passions, and actuated only by that pleasurable excitement which had resulted from the energetic fervour of his own spirit in so vividly exhibiting what it had so accurately and profoundly contemplated. I think I should have conjectured from these poems, that even then the great instinct which impelled the poet to the drama was secretly working in him, prompting him by a series and never-broken chain of imagery, always vivid, and, because unbroken, often minute,—by the highest effort of the picturesque in words of which words are capable, higher perhaps than was ever realised by any other poet, even Dante not excepted,—to provide a substitute for that visual language, that constant intervention and running comment by tone, look, and gesture, which in his dramatic works he was entitled to expect from the players. His Venus and Adonis seem at once the characters themselves, and the whole representation of those characters by the most consummate actors. You

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seem to be *told* nothing but to see and hear everything. Hence it is that in the perpetual activity of attention required on the part of the reader,—from the rapid flow, the quick change, and the playful nature of the thoughts and images,—and, above all, from the alienation, and if I may hazard such an expression, the utter *aliveness* of the poet's own feelings from those of which he is at once the painter and the analyst,—that though the very subject cannot but detract from the pleasure of a delicate mind yet never was poem less dangerous on a moral account.”

Coleridge, in the preceding chapter of his ‘Literary Life,’ says, “During the first year that Mr Wordsworth and I were neighbours our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry—the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination. In Coleridge’s ‘Literary Remains’ the ‘Venus and Adonis’ is cited as furnishing a signal example of “that affectionate love of nature and natural objects, without which no man could have observed so steadily, or painted so truly and passionately, the very minutest beauties of the external world. The description of the hare hunt is there given at length as a specimen of this power. A remarkable proof of the completeness as well as accuracy of Shakspeare’s description lately presented itself to our mind running through a little volume full of elegant illustrations in 1825—‘Lays and Sketches of Character’ by the late Richard Altyn,

* ‘Lays and Sketches,’ 1827, vol. i. p. 15.

Esq. ' There is a paper on hunting, and especially on hare-hunting. He says—' I am not one of the perfect fox-hunters of these realms; but having been in the way of late of seeing a good deal of various modes of hunting, I would, for the benefit of the uninitiated, set down the results of my observations.' In this matter he writes with a perfect unconsciousness that he is describing what any one has described before. But as accurate an observer *had* been before him.—

"She (the hare) generally returns to the seat from which she was put up, running as all the world knows, in a circle, or something sometimes like it, we had better say, that we may keep on good terms with the mathematical. At starting, she tears away at her utmost speed for a mile or more, and distances the dogs half-way. She then returns, diverging a little to the right or left that she may not run into the mouths of her enemies—a necessity which accounts for what we call the circularity of her course. Her flight from home is direct and precipitate, but on her way back, when she has gained a little time for consideration and stratagem, she describes a curious labyrinth of short turnings and windings, as if to perplex the dogs by the intricacy of her track.

Compare this with Shakspeare —

' And when the first of this year is
Made up, will it be but this,
How to turn it with an hundred
He cranks and crosses with thousand dobles
The many mazes through the which he goes
Are like a labyrinth to amaze his foes

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Mr Ayton thus goes on —

“The hounds, whom we left in full cry, continue then music without remission as long as they are faithful to the scent, as a summons, it should seem, like the seaman's cry, to pull together, or keep together, and it is a certain proof to themselves and their followers that they are in the right way. On the instant that they are ‘at fault,’ or lose the scent, they are silent. * * * The weather, in its impression on the scent, is the great father of ‘faults,’ but they may arise from other accidents, even when the day is in every respect favourable. The intervention of ploughed land, on which the scent soon cools or evaporates, is at least perilous, but sheep-stains, recently left by a flock, are fatal: they cut off the scent irrecoverably—making a gap, as it were, in the clue, in which the dogs have not even a hint for their guidance.

Compare Shakspeare again —

‘Sometime he runs among a flock of sheep,
To make the cunning hounds mistake their smell
And sometime when earth delving comes to keep,
To stop the bounding hounds in their yell,
And sometime snatch with a hind of deer
Dun or deviseth shifts: wit waits on fun.

“For there his smell with others being mingled
The lost or snuffing hound need venture doubt
Ceasing their clamorous cry till they have singled
With much ado the cold fault cleanly out,
Then do they spend their mouths: I hear replies,
As if in the chase were in the skies.’

One more extract from Mr Ayton —

“Suppose then, after the usual rounds, that you see

the hare at last (a weary mark for so many foes) sorely beleaguered—looking dark and daggled—and limping heavily along, then stopping to listen—again tottering on a little—and again stopping, and at every step and every pause, hearing the death-cry grow nearer and louder.

One more comparison, and we have exhausted Shakspeare's description —

By this poor Wat fell off upon a hill,
Stands on his hinder legs with listening ear
To be taken if his foes pursue him still,
Anon then loud drums he doth hear,
And now his grief may be compared well
To one sore sick that hears the passing bell

‘ Then shalt thou see the de-bedabbled wretch
Turn and return, indenting with the way
Each envious briar his weary legs doth scratch
Each shrub now make him stop, each murmur stave,
For nescient treacherous oblivion
And loathing now new relieved him

Here then be it observed, are not only the same objects the same accents, the same movement, in each description, but the very words employed to convey the scene to the mind are often the same in each. It would be easy to say that Mr. Ayton copied Shakspeare. We believe he did not. There is a sturdy independence at his writings which would have led him to notice the ‘Venus and Adonis’ if he had had it in his mind. Shakspeare and he had each looked minutely and practically upon the same scene, and the wonder is, not that Shakspeare was an accurate describer but that in

him the accurate is so thoroughly fused with the poetical, that it is one and the same life.

The celebrated description of the courser in the 'Venus and Adonis' is another remarkable instance of the accuracy of the young Shakspeare's observation. Not the most experienced dealer ever knew the *points* of a horse better. The whole poem indeed is full of evidence that the circumstances by which the writer was surrounded, in a country district, had entered deeply into his mind, and were reproduced in the poetical form. The bird "tangled in a net"—the "di-dapper peering through a wave"—the "blue-veined violets"—the

" Red morn, that ever yet betoken'd
Wreck to the seaman, tempest to the field "

the fisher that forbears the "ungrown fry"—the sheep "gone to fold"—the caterpillars feeding on "the tender leaves"—and, not to weary with examples, that exquisite image,

" Look how a bright star shooteth from the sky,
So glides he in the night from Venus' eye "

all these bespeak a poet who had formed himself upon nature, and not upon books. To understand the value as well as the rarity of this quality in Shakspeare, we should open any contemporary poem. Take Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander' for example. We read line after line, beautiful, gorgeous, running over with a satiating luxuriousness; but we look in vain for a single familiar image. Shakspeare describes what he has seen, throwing over the real the delicious tint of his own imagination. Marlowe looks at Nature herself very rarely; but he

knows all the conventional images by which the real is supposed to be elevated into the poetical. His most beautiful things are thus but copies of copies. The mode in which each poet describes the morning will illustrate our meaning —

“ Lo! here the gentle lark, weary of rest,
From his moist cabinet mounts up on high,
And wakes the morning from whose silver breast
The sun ariseth in his majesty;
Who doth the world so gloriously behold,
The cedar tops and hills seem burnish’d gold.”

We feel that *this* is true Compare—

“ By this Apollo’s golden harp begin
To sound forth music to the ocean;
Which watchful Hesperus no sooner heard
But he the day bright-beaming car prepar’d,
And ran before, as harbinger of light,
And with his flaming beams mock’d ugly Night,
Till she, overcome with anguish, shame, and rage,
Dang’d down to hell her loathsome carriage.”

We are taught that *this* is classical.

Coleridge has observed that, “in the ‘Venus and Adonis,’ the first and most obvious excellence is the perfect sweetness of the versification; its adaptation to the subject; and the power displayed in varying the march of the words without passing into a loftier and more majestic rhythm than was demanded by the thoughts, or permitted by the propriety of preserving a sense of melody predominant.”* This self-controlling power of “varying the march of the words without passing into a loftier and more majestic rhythm” is perhaps one

* ‘Biographia Literaria,’ vol. ii. p. 14.

of the most signal instances of Shakspeare's consummate mastery of his art, even as a very young man. He who, at the proper season, knew how to strike the grandest music within the compass of our own powerful and sonorous language, in his early productions breathes out his thoughts

" To the Dorian mood
Of flutes and soft recorder."

The sustained sweetness of the versification is never cloying; and yet there are no violent contrasts, no sudden elevations: all is equable in its infinite variety. The early comedies are full of the same rare beauty. In 'Love's Labour's Lost'—'The Comedy of Errors'—'A Midsummer Night's Dream'—we have verses of alternate rhymes formed upon the same model as those of the 'Venus and Adonis,' and producing the same feeling of placid delight by their exquisite harmony. The same principles on which he built the versification of the 'Venus and Adonis' exhibited to him the grace which these elegiac harmonies would impart to the scenes of repose in the progress of a dramatic action.

We proceed to the 'Lucrece.' Of that poem the date of the composition is fixed as accurately as we can desire. In the dedication to the 'Venus and Adonis' the poet says—"If your honour seem but pleased I account myself highly praised, and vow to take advantage of all idle hours till I have honoured you with some graver labour." In 1594, a year after the 'Venus and Adonis,' 'Lucrece' was published, and was dedicated to Lord Southampton. This, then, was

undoubtedly the "graver labour," this was the produce of the "idle hours" of 1593. Shakspeare was then nearly thirty years of age—the period at which it is held by some he first began to produce anything original for the stage. The poet unquestionably intended the "graver labour" for a higher effort than had produced the "first heir" of his invention. He describes the 'Venus and Adonis' as "unpolished lines"—lines thrown off with youthful luxuriousness and rapidity. The verses of the 'Lucrece' are "untutored lines"—lines formed upon no established model. There is to our mind the difference of eight or even ten years in the aspect of these poems—a difference as manifest as that which exists between 'Love's Labour's Lost' and 'Romeo and Juliet'. Coleridge has marked the great distinction between the one poem and the other.—

"The 'Venus and Adonis' did not perhaps allow the display of the deeper passions. But the story of Lucretia seems to favour, and even demand, their intensest workings. And yet we find in *Shakespeare's* management of the tale neither pathos nor any other *dramatic* quality. There is the same minute and faithful imagery as in the former poem, in the same vivid colours, inspirited by the same impetuous vigour of thought, and diverging and contracting with the same activity of the assimilative and of the modifying faculties; and with a yet larger display, a yet wider range of knowledge and reflection. and, lastly, with the same perfect dominion, often *domination*, over the whole world of language."*

* 'Biographia Literaria,' vol. ii p. 21.

It is in this paragraph that Coleridge has marked the difference—which a critic of the very highest order could alone have pointed out—between the power which Shakspeare's mind possessed of going out of itself in a narrative poem, and the dramatic power. The same mighty, and to most unattainable, power, of utterly subduing the self-conscious to the universal, was essential to the highest excellence of both species of composition,—the poem and the drama. But the exercise of that power was essentially different in each. Coleridge, in another place, says, “in his very first production he projected his mind out of his own particular being, and felt, and made others feel, on subjects no way connected with himself except by force of contemplation, and that sublime faculty by which a great mind becomes that on which it meditates.”* But this “sublime faculty” went greatly farther when it became dramatic. In the narrative poems of an ordinary man we perpetually see the narrator. Coleridge, in a passage previously quoted, has shown the essential superiority of Shakspeare's narrative poems, where the whole is placed before our view, the poet unparticipating in the passions. There is a remarkable example of how strictly Shakspeare adhered to this principle in his beautiful poem of ‘A Lover's Complaint.’ There the poet is actually present to the scene:—

“ From off a hill whose concave womb re worded
A plaintful story from a sistering vale,
My spirits to attend this double voice accorded,
And down I laid to list the sad-tun'd tale.”

* ‘Literary Remains,’ vol. ii. p. 54.

But not one word of comment does he offer upon the revelations of the "fickle maid full pale." The dramatic power, however, as we have said, is many steps beyond this. It dispenses with narrative altogether. It renders a complicated story, or stories, *one* in the action. It makes the characters reveal *themselves*, sometimes by a word. It trusts for everything to the capacity of an audience to appreciate the greatest subtilties, and the nicest shades of passion, *through* the action. It is the very reverse of the oratorical power, which repeats and explains. And how is it able to effect this prodigious mastery over the *senses* and the understanding? By raising the mind of the spectator, or reader, into such a state of poetical excitement as corresponds in some degree to the excitement of the poet, and thus clears away the mists of our ordinary vision, and irradiates the whole complex moral world in which we for a time live, and move, and have our being, with the brightness of his own intellectual sunlight. Now, it appears to us that, although the 'Venus and Adonis,' and the 'Lucrece,' do not pretend to be the creations of this wonderful power—their forms did not demand its complete exercise—they could not have been produced by a man who did not possess the power, and had assiduously cultivated it in its own proper field. In the second poem, more especially, do we think the power has reached a higher development, indicating itself in "a yet wider range of knowledge and reflection."

Malone says, "I have observed that Painter has inserted the story of Lucrece in the first volume of his

'Palace of Pleasure,' 1567, on which I make no doubt our author formed his poem. Be it so. The story of Lucrece in Painter's novel occupies four pages. The first page describes the circumstances that preceded the unholy visit of Tarquin to Lucrece, nearly the whole of the two last pages detail the events that followed the death of Lucrece. A page and a half at most is given to the tragedy. This is proper enough in a narrative, whose business it is to make all the circumstances intelligible. But the narrative poet, who was also thoroughly master of the dramatic power, concentrates all the interest upon the main circumstances of the story. He places the scene of those circumstances before our eyes at the very opening —

From the besieged Ardea all in post
Borne by the trustless wings of false desire,
Lust-breathed Tarquin leaves the Roman host
And to Collatium bears &c

The preceding circumstances which impel this journey are then rapidly told. Again, after the crowning action of the tragedy, the poet has done. He tells the consequences of it with a brevity and simplicity indicating the most consummate art.

'When they had sworn to this advised doom
They did conclude to bear dead Lucrece thence
To show her bleeding body thorough Rome
And so to punish Tarquin's foul offence
Which being done with speedy diligence,
The Romans joyously did give consent
To Tarquin's everlasting banishment

He has thus cleared away all the encumbrances to the progress of the main action. He would have done the

same had he made Lucrece the subject of a drama. But he has to tell his painful story and to tell it all: not to exhibit a portion of it, as he would have done had he chosen the subject for a tragedy. The consummate delicacy with which he has accomplished this is beyond all praise, perhaps above all imitation. He puts forth his strength on the accessories of the main incident. He delights to make the chief actors analyse their own thoughts—reflect, explain, expostulate. All this is essentially undramatic, and he meant it to be so. But then, what pictures does he paint of the progress of the action, which none but a great dramatic poet, who had visions of future Macbeths and Othellos before him, could have painted! Look, for example, at that magnificent scene, when

‘ No comfortable star did lend his light ’

of Tarquin leaping from his bed, and, softly suiting his falchion on a flint lighting a torch

‘ Which must be lo le-star to his lustful eye

Look, again, at the exquisite domestic incident which tells of the quiet and gentle occupation of his devoted victim —

‘ By the light he spies

Lucretia’s glove wherein her needle sticks

He takes it from the rushes where it lies

The hand to which that glove belongs is described in the very perfection of poetry —

‘ Without the bed her other fair hand was

On the green coverlet whose perfect white

Show’d like an April daisy on the grass

In the chamber of innocence Tarquin is painted with

terrible grandeur, which is overpowering by the force of contrast —

" This said he shakes aloft his Roman blade,
Which, like a falcon towering in the skies
Coucheth the fowl below with his wings shade "

The complaint of Lucrece after Tarquin has departed was meant to be undramatic. The action advances not. The character develops not itself in the action. But the poet makes his heroine bewail her fate in every variety of lament that his boundless command of imagery could furnish. The letter to Collatine is written,—a letter of the most touching simplicity —

' Thou worthy lord
Of that unworthy wife that greeteth thee
Health to thy person ! Next to which life to afford
(If ever I see thy Lucrece thou wilt see)
Some great speed to come and visit me
So I'll immerg me from our world in grief
My woes are tedious though my words are brief "

Again the action languishes, and again Lucrece surrenders herself to her grief. The

" Skillful painting made for Priam's Troy
is one of the most elaborate passages of the poem, essentially cast in an undramatic mould. But this is but a prelude to the catastrophe, where, if we mistake not, a strength of passion is put forth which is worthy him who drew the terrible agonies of Lear —

" Here with a sigh, as if her heart would break,
She throws forth Tarquin's name ' He he, she says,
But more than he her poor tongue could not speak,
Hil' after many accents and delays,
Untimely breathings, sick and short assays,
She utters this ' He he, fair lords, 't is he,
That guides this hand to give this wound to me "

Malone, in his concluding remarks upon the 'Venus and Adonis,' and 'Lucrece,' says, "We should do Shakspeare injustice were we to try them by a comparison with more modern and polished productions, or with our present idea of poetical excellence" This was written in the year 1780—the period which rejoiced in the "polished productions" of Hayley and Miss Seward, and founded its "idea of poetical excellence" on some standard which, secure in its conventional forms, might depart as far as possible from simplicity and nature, to give us words without thought, arranged in verses without music. It would be injustice indeed to Shakspeare to try the 'Venus and Adonis,' and 'Lucrece,' by such a standard of "poetical excellence." But we have outlived that period. By way of apology for Shakspeare, Malone adds, "that few authors rise much above the age in which they live." He further says, "the poems of 'Venus and Adonis' and the 'Rape of Lucrece,' whatever opinion may be now entertained of them, were certainly much admired in Shakspeare's lifetime." This is consolatory. In Shakspeare's lifetime there were a few men that the world has since thought somewhat qualified to establish an 'idea of poetical excellence'—Spenser, Drayton, Jonson, Fletcher, Chapman, for example. These were not much valued in Malone's golden age of "more modern and polished productions,"—but let that pass. We are coming back to the opinions of this obsolete school, and we venture to think the majority of readers now will not require us to make an apology for Shakspeare's poems.

If Malone thought it necessary to solicit indulgence for the 'Venus and Adonis,' and 'Lucrece,' he drew even a more timid breath when he ventured to speak of the 'Sonnets.' "I do not feel any great propensity to stand forth as the champion of these compositions. However, as it appears to me that they have been somewhat underrated, I think it incumbent on me to do them that justice to which they seem entitled." No wonder he speaks timidly. The great poetical lawgiver of his time—the greater than Shakspeare, for he undertook to mend him, and refine him, and make him fit to be tolerated by the super-elegant intellects of the days of George III.—had pronounced that the 'Sonnets' were too bad even for his genius to make tolerable. He, Steevens, who would take up a play of Shakspeare's in the condescending spirit with which a clever tutor takes up a smart boy's verses,—altering a word here, piecing out a line there, commending this thought, shaking his head at this false prosody, and acknowledging upon the whole that the thing is pretty well, seeing how much the lad has yet to learn—he sent forth his decree that nothing less than an act of parliament could compel the reading of Shakspeare's 'Sonnets.' For a long time mankind bowed before the oracle; and the 'Sonnets' were not read. Wordsworth has told us something about this :—

"There is extant a small volume of miscellaneous poems in which Shakspeare expresses his feelings in his own person. It is not difficult to conceive that the editor, George Steevens, should have been insensible to the beauties of one portion of that volume, the 'Sonnets;'

though there is not a part of the writings of this poet where is found, in an equal compass, a greater number of exquisite feelings felicitously expressed. But, from regard to the critic's own credit, he would not have ventured to talk of an act of parliament not being strong enough to compel the perusal of these, or any production of Shakspeare, if he had not known that the people of England were ignorant of the treasures contained in those little pieces." *

That ignorance has been removed; and no one has contributed more to its removal, by creating a school of poetry founded upon Truth and Nature, than Wordsworth himself. The critics of the last century have passed away:—

"Peor and Baðim
Forsake their temples dim."

By the operation of what great sustaining principle is it that we have come back to the just appreciation of "the treasures contained in those little pieces"? The poet-critic will answer:—

"There never has been a period, and perhaps never will be, in which vicious poetry, of some kind or other, has not excited more zealous admiration, and been far more generally read, than good; but this advantage attends the good, that the *individual*, as well as the species, survives from age to age: whereas, of the depraved, though the species be immortal, the individual quickly *perishes*; the object of present admiration vanishes, being supplanted by some other as easily produced, which, though no better, brings with it at least

* Preface to Poetical Works.

the irritation of novelty,—with adaptation, more or less skilful, to the changing humours of the majority of those who are most at leisure to regard poetical works when they first solicit their attention. Is it the result of the whole that, in the opinion of the writer, the judgment of the people is not to be respected? The thought is most injurious, and, could the charge be brought against him, he would repel it with indignation. The people have already been justified, and their eulogium pronounced by implication when it is said, above—that, of good poetry, the *individual*, as well as the species, *survives*. And how does it survive but through the people? what preserves it but their intellect and their wisdom?

‘ Past and future are the wings
On whose support, harmonious, conjoined,
Moves the great spirit of human knowledge —MS

The voice that issues from this spirit is that *vox populi* which the Deity inspires. Foolish must he be who can mistake for this a local acclamation, or a transitory outcry—transitory though it be for years, local though from a nation! Still more lamentable is his error who can believe that there is anything of divine infallibility in the clamour of that small though loud portion of the community, ever governed by factitious influence, which, under the name of the PUBLIC, passes itself, upon the unthinking, for the PEOPLE.*

It is this perpetual mistake of the public for the people that has led to the belief that there was a period when Shakspeare was neglected. He was *always* in the heart

* Preface to Poetical Works

of the people. There, in that deep, rich soil, have the Sonnets rested during two centuries; and here and there in remote places have the seeds put forth leaves and flowers. All young imaginative minds now rejoice in their hues and their fragrance. But this preference of the fresh and beautiful of poetical life to the *pot-pourri* of the last age must be a regulated love. Those who, seeing the admiration which now prevails for these out-pourings of "exquisite feelings felicitously expressed," talk of the 'Sonnets' as equal, if not superior, to the greatest of the poet's mighty dramas, compare things that admit of no comparison. Who would speak in the same breath of the gem of Cupid and Psyche, and the Parthenon? In the 'Sonnets,' exquisite as they are, the poet goes not out of himself (at least in the *form* of the composition), and he walks, therefore, in a narrow circle of art. In the 'Venus and Adonis,' and the 'Lucrece,' the circle widens. But in the Dramas, the centre is the Human Soul, the circumference the Universe.

NOTICE.

THE present edition of the Poems of Shakspeare comprises the VENUS AND ADONIS, THE RAPE OF LUCRECE, THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM, THE LOVER'S COMPLAINT, and the SONNETS. The Songs from the Plays of Shakspeare are necessarily excluded from this edition, it being sufficient for the reader to make a reference to the Dramas to which they respectively belong.

TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE HENRY WRIOTHESLEY

EARL OF SOUTHAMPTON, AND BARON OF FITCHFIELD.

RIGHT HONOURABLE,

I KNOW not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to your Lordship, nor how the world will censure me for choosing so strong a prop to support so weak a burthen: only if your honour seem but pleased, I account myself highly praised, and vow to take advantage of all idle hours till I have honoured you with some graver labour. But if the first heir of my invention prove deformed, I shall be sorry it had so noble a godfather, and never after ear^a so barren a land, for fear it yield me still so bad a harvest. I leave it to your honourable survey, and your honour^b to your heart's content; which I wish may always answer your own wish, and the world's hopeful expectation.

Your Honour's in all duty,

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

^a *Ear*—plough

^b *Honour* As a duke is now styled "your grace," so "your honour" was formerly the usual mode of address to noblemen in general.

VENUS AND ADONIS.

EVEN as the sun with purple-colour'd face
 Had ta'en his last leave of the weeping morn,
 Rose-cheek'd Adonis hied him to the chase;
 Hunting he lov'd, but love he laugh'd to scorn;
 Sick-thoughted Venus makes amain unto him,
 And like a bold-fac'd suitor 'gins to woo him.

"Thrice fairer than myself," thus she began,
 "The field's chief flower, sweet above compare,
 Stain to all nymphs, more lovely than a man,
 More white and red than doves or roses are;
 Nature that made thee, with herself at strife,
 Saith that the world hath ending with thy life.

"Vouchsafe, thou wonder, to alight thy steed,
 And rein his proud head to the saddle-bow;
 If thou wilt deign this favour, for thy meed
 A thousand honey-secrets shalt thou know:
 Here come and sit, where never serpent hisses,
 And being set I'll smother thee with kisses;

"And yet not cloy thy lips with loath'd satiety,
 But rather famish them amid their plenty,
 Making them red and pale with flesh variety,
 Ten kisses short as one, one long as twenty:
 A summer's day will seem an hour but short,
 Being wasted in such time-beguiling sport."

With this she seizeth on his sweating palm,
 The precedent of pith and livelihood,
 And, trembling in her passion, calls it balm,
 Earth's sovereign salve to do a goddess good:

Being so enrag'd, desire doth lend her force
 Courageously to pluck him from his horse.

Over one arm the lusty courser's rein,
 Under her other was the tender boy,
 Who blush'd and pouted in a dull disdain,
 With leaden appetite, unapt to toy;
 She red and hot as coals of glowing fire,
 He red for shame, but frosty in desire.

The studded bridle on a ragged bough
 Nimble she fastens; (O how quick is love!)
 The steed is stalled up, and even now
 To tie the rider she begins to prove:
 Backward she push'd him, as she would be thrust
 And govern'd him in strength, though not in lust

So soon was she along, as he was down,
 Each leaning on their elbows and their hips:
 Now doth she stroke his cheek, now doth he frown,
 And 'gins to chide, but soon she stops his lips:
 And kissing speaks, with lustful language broken,
 "If thou wilt chide, thy lips shall never open."

He burns with bashful shame; she with her tears
 Doth quench the maiden burning of his cheeks:
 Then with her windy sighs, and golden hairs,
 To fan and blow them dry again she seeks:
 He saith she is immodest, blames her "miss":
 What follows more she murders with a kiss.

Even as an empty eagle, sharp by fast,
 Tires^b with her beak on feathers, flesh, and bone,
 Shaking her wings, devouring all in haste,
 Till either gorge be stuff'd, or prey be gone;
 Even so she kiss'd his brow, his cheek, his chin,
 And where she ends she doth anew begin.

^a 'Miss—amiss, fault'

^b Tires—tears, preys.

Forc'd to content,^a but never to obey,
 Panting he lies, and breatheth in her face;
 She feedeth on the steam, as on a prey,
 And calls it heavenly moisture, air of grace,
 Wishing her cheeks were gardens full of flowers,
 So they were dew'd with such distilling showers.

Look how a bird lies tangled in a net,
 So fasten'd in her arms Adonis lies;
 Pure shame and aw'd resistance made him fret,
 Which bled more beauty in his angry eyes:
 Rain added to a river that is rank,^b
 Perforce will force it overflow the bank.

Still she entreats, and prettily entreats,
 For to a pretty ear she tunes her tale;
 Still is he sullen, still he low'rs and frets,
 'Twixt crimson shame, and anger ashy pale;
 Being red, she loves him best; and being white,
 Her best is better'd with a more delight.

Look how he can, she cannot choose but love;
 And by her fair immortal hand she swears
 From his soft bosom never to remove,
 Till he take truce with her contending tears,
 Which long have rain'd, making her cheeks all wet;
 And one sweet kiss shall pay this countless debt.

Upon this promise did he raise his chin,
 Like a dive-dapper^c peering through a wave,

^a *Content*—acquiescence.

^b *Rank*—full. *Rank* is often used to express excess or violence generally; and *rankness* is applied to a flood, in 'King John,' Act V. sc. 4 —

"And like a bated and retired flood,
 Leaving our *rankness* and irregular course."

^c *Dive-dapper*. One of the familiar names of the dab chick is *dive-dapper*, or *di-dapper*; and this was the old poetical name.

Who, being look'd on, ducks as quickly in ;
 So offers he to give what she did crave ;
 But when her lips were ready for his pay,
 He winks, and turns his lips another way.

Never did passenger in summer's heat
 More thirst for drink, than she for this good turn :
 Her help she sees, but help she cannot get ;
 She bathes in water, yet her fire must burn :
 " O, pity," 'gan she cry, " flint-hearted boy !
 'Tis but a kiss I beg ; why art thou coy ?

" I have been woo'd, as I entreat thee now,
 Even by the stern and direful god of war,
 Whose sinewy neck in battle ne'er did bow,
 Who conquers where he comes, in every jar :
 Yet hath he been my captive and my slave,
 And begg'd for that which thou unask'd shalt have

" Over my altars hath he hung his ~~ance~~ance,
 His batter'd shield, his uncontrolled crest,
 And for my sake hath learn'd to sport and dance,
 To toy, to wanton, dally, smile, and jest ;
 Scorning his charlish drum, and ensign red,
 Making my arms his field, his tent my bed.

" Thus he that overrul'd I oversway'd,
 Leading him prisoner in a red-rose chain :
 Strong-temper'd steel his stronger strength obey'd,
 Yet was he servile to my coy disdain.
 O be not proud, nor brag not of thy might,
 For mastering her that foil'd the god of fight !

" Touch but my lips with those fair lips of thine,
 (Though mine be not so fair, yet are they red,)
 The kiss shall be thine own as well as mine :—
 What seest thou in the ground ? hold up thy head ;
 Look in mine eyeballs, there thy beauty lies :
 Then why not lips on lips, since eyes in eyes ?

" Art thou ashamed to kiss ? then wink again,
And I will wink so shall the day seem night .
Love keeps his revells where there are but twain ,
Be bold to play, our sport is not in sight .

These blue veined violets wheron we lean
Never can blab, nor know not what we mean.

" The tender spring upon thy tempting lip
Shew thee unripe yet mayst thou well be tasted ,
Make use of time, let not advantage slip ,
Beauty within itself should not be wasted

Fair flowers that are not gather'd in their prime
Rot and consume themselves in little time

" Were I hard-favour'd, foul, or wrinkled-old,
Ill-nurtur'd, crooked, churlish, harsh in voice,
Old worn, despised, rheumatic and cold,
Thick-sighted, barren, lean, and lacking juice,
Then mightst thou pause, for then I were not for thee ;
But having no defects, why dost abhor me ?

" Thou canst not see one wrinkle in my brow ,
Mine eyes are grey," and bright, and quick in turning ;
My beauty as the spring doth yearly grow,
My flesh is soft and plump, my marrow burning ,
My smooth moist hand, were it with thy hand felt,
Would in thy palm dissolve, or seem to melt

" Bid me discourse, I will enchant thine ear,
Or, like a fairy, trip upon the green,
Or, like a nymph, with long dishevell'd hair,
Dance on the sands, and yet no footing seen .
Love is a spirit all compact of fire,
Not gross to sink, but light, and will aspire

* *Grey* is said to be here used as *blue* We have subsequently—

" Her two *blue* wind waftly sleight with
But the eye lids are the ' blue windows

" Witness this primrose bank whereon I lie ;
 These forceless flowers like sturdy trees support me ;
 Two strengthless doves will draw me through the sky,
 From morn to night, even where I list to sport me
 Is love so light, sweet boy and may it be
 That thou shouldst think it heavy unto thee ?

" Is thine own heart to thine own face afflicted ?
 Can thy right hand seize love upon thy left ?
 Then woo thyself, be of thyself rejected,
 Steal thine own freedom, and complain on theft
 Narcissus so himself himself forsook,
 And died to kiss his shadow in the brook.

' Torches are made to light, jewels to wear,
 Dainties to taste, fresh beauty for the use,
 Herbs for their smell, and sappy plants to bear,
 Things growing to themselves are growth's abuse
 Seeds spring from seeds, and beauty breedeth beauty,
 Thou wast begot,—to get it is thy duty.

" Upon the earth's increase why shouldst thou feed,
 Unless the earth with thy increase be fed ?
 By law of Nature thou art bound to breed,
 That thine may live, when thou thyself art dead,
 And so in spite of death thou dost survive,
 In that thy likeness still is left alive

By this the love-sick queen began to sweat,
 For, where they lay, the shadow had forsook them,
 And Titan, tired^a in the midday heat,
 With burning eye did hotly overlook them,
 Wishing Adonis had his team to guide,
 So he were like him, and by Venus side

And now Adonis, with a lazy spright,
 And with a heavy, dark, disliking eye,

^a Tired—tired

His lowering brows o'erwhelming his fair sight,
 Like misty vapours when they blot the sky,
 Souring his cheeks, cries, "Fie, no more of love!
 The sun doth burn my face; I must remove."

"Ah me," quoth Venus, "young, and so unkind!
 What bare excuses mak'st thou to be gone!
 I'll sigh celestial breath, whose gentle wind
 Shall cool the heat of this descending sun;
 I'll make a shadow for thee of my hairs;
 If they burn too, I'll quench them with my tears."

"The sun that shines from heaven shines but warm,
 And lo, I lie between that sun and thee;
 The heat I have from thence doth little harm,
 Thine eye darts forth the fire that burneth me:
 And were I not immortal, life were done,
 Between this heavenly and earthly sun."

"Art thou obdurate, flinty, hard as steel,
 Nay, more than flint, for stone at rain relenteth?
 Art thou a woman's son, and canst not feel
 What 't is to love? how want of love tormenteth?
 O had thy mother borne so hard a mind,
 She had not brought forth thee, but died unkind.^a

"What am I, that thou shouldst contemn^b me this?
 Or what great danger dwells upon my suit?
 What were thy lips the worse for one poor kiss?
 Speak, fair; but speak fair words, or else be mute:
 Give me one kiss, I'll give it thee again,
 And one for interest, if thou wilt have twain."

^a *Unkind*. Milton applies the same epithet, in the same way, in his 'Doctrine of Divorce':—"The desire and longing to put off an *unkindly* solitariness by uniting another body, but not without a fit soul, to his, in the cheerful society of wedlock."

^b *Contemn* is here used in the sense of throw aside

"Fie, lifeless picture, cold and senseless stone,
Well-painted idol, image dull and dead,
Statue contenting but the eye alone,
Thing like a man, but of no woman bred ;
Thou art no man, though of a man's complexion,
For men will kiss even by their own direction."

This said, impatience chokes her pleading tongue,
And swelling passion doth provoke a pause ;
Red cheeks and fiery eyes blaze forth her wrong ;
Being judge in love, she cannot right her cause :
And now she weeps, and now she fain would speak,
And now her sobs do her intendments^a break.

Sometimes she shakes her head, and then his hand,
Now gazeth she on him, now on the ground ;
Sometimes her arms unfold him like a hand ;
She would, he will not in her arms be bound ;
And when from thence he struggles to be gone,
She locks her lily fingers one in one.

"Fondling," she saith, "since I have hemm'd thee
here,
Within the circuit of this ivory pale,
I'll be a park, and thou shalt be my deer ;
Feed where thou wilt, on mountain or in dale :
Graze on my lips ; and if those hills be dry,
Stray lower, where the pleasant fountains lie.

"Within this limit is relief enough,
Sweet bottom-grass, and high delightful plain,
Round rising hillocks, brakes obscure and rough,
To shelter thee from tempest and from rain ;
Then be my deer, since I am such a park ;
No dog shall rouse thee, tho' a thousand bark."

^a *Intendments* - intentions.

At this Adonis smiles as in disdain,
 That in each cheek appears a pretty dimple :
 Love made those hollows, if himself were slain,
 He might be buried in a tomb so simple ;
 Foreknowing well if there he came to lie,
 Why there Love liv'd and there he could not die.

These lovely caves, these round-enchancing pits,
 Open'd their mouths to swallow Venus' liking :
 Being mad before, how doth she now for wits ?
 Struck dead at first, what needs a second striking ?
 Poor queen of love, in thine own law forlorn,
 To love a cheek that smiles at thee in scorn !

Now which way shall she turn ? what shall she say ?
 Her words are done, her woes the more increasing,
 The time is spent, her object will away,
 And from her twining arms doth urge releasing :
 " Pity " — she cries, — " some favour — some re-
 morse " —

Away he springs, and hasteth to his horse.

But lo, from forth a copse that neighbours by,
 A breeding jennet, lusty, young, and proud,
 Adonis' trampling courser doth espy,
 And forth she rushes, snorts, and neighs aloud :
 The strong-neck'd steed, being tied unto a tree,
 Breaketh his rein, and to her straight goes he.

Imperiously he leaps, he neighs, he bounds,
 And now his woven girths he breaks asunder ;
 The bearing earth with his hard hoof he wounds,
 Whose hollow womb resounds like heaven's thunder ;
 The iron bit he crushes 'tween his teeth,
 Controlling what he was controlled with.

" *Remorse* — tenderness.

His ears up prick'd ; his braided hanging mane
 Upon his compass'd ^a crest now stand on end ;^b
 His nostrils drink the air, and forth again,
 As from a furnace, vapours doth he send :
 His eye, which scornfully glisters like fire,
 Shows his hot courage and his high desire.

Sometime he trots, as if he told the steps,
 With gentle majesty, and modest pride ;
 Anon he rears upright, curvets, and leaps,
 As who should say, lo ! thus my strength is tried ;
 And this I do to captivate the eye
 Of the fair breeder that is standing by.

What recketh he his rider's angry stir,
 His flattering " holla,"^c or his " Stand, I say " ?
 What cares he now for curb, or pricking spur ?
 For rich caparisons, or trapping gay ?
 He sees his love, and nothing else he sees,
 Nor nothing else with his proud sight agrees.

Look when a painter would surpass the life,
 In limning out a well-proportion'd steed,
 His art with nature's workmanship at strife,
 As if the dead the living should exceed ;
 So did this horse excel a common one,
 In shape, in courage, colour, pace, and bone.

Round-hoof'd, short-jointed, fetlocks shag and long,
 Broad breast, full eye, small head, and nostril wide,
 High crest, short ears, straight legs, and passing strong,
 Thin mane, thick tail, broad buttock, tender hide :

^a *Compass'd*—arched.

^b *Mane* is here used as a plural noun.

^c *Holla* *Ho* is the ancient interjection, giving notice to stop. The word before us is certainly the same as the French *hola*, and is explained in Cotgrave's French Dictionary as meaning ' enough, soft, soft, no more of that.'

Look what a horse should have, he did not lack,
Save a proud rider on so proud a back.

Sometime he scuds far off, and there he stares;
Anon he starts at stirring of a feather;
To bid the wind a base^a he now prepares,
And whe'r he run, or fly, they knew not whether;
For thro' his mane and tail the high wind sings,
Fanning the hairs, who wave like feather'd wings.

He looks upon his love and neighs unto her;
She answers him as if she knew his mind:
Being proud, as females are, to see him woo her,
She puts on outward strangeness, seems unkind;
Spurns at his love, and scorns the heat he feels,
Beating his kind embracements with her heels.

Then, like a melancholy malecontent,
He vails^b his tail, that, like a falling plume,
Cool shadow to his melting buttock lent;
He stamps and bites the poor flies in his fume:
His love, perceiving how he is enrag'd,
Grew kinder, and his fury was assuag'd.

His testy master goeth about to take him;
When lo, the unback'd breeder, full of fear,
Jealous of catching, swiftly doth forsake him,
With her the horse, and left Adonis there:
As they were mad unto the wood they hie them,
Out-stripping crows that strive to over-fly them.

All swoln with chasing down Adonis sits,
Banning his boisterous and unruly beast;
And now the happy season once more fits,
That love-sick Love by pleading may be blest;

^a In the game of *base*, or *prison base*, one runs and challenges another to pursue.

^b *Vails*—lowers.

For lovers say the heart hath treble wrong,
When it is barr'd the aidance of the tongue.

An oven that is stopp'd, or river stay'd,
Burneth more hotly, swelleth with more rage :
So of concealed sorrow may be said ;
Five vent of words love's fire doth assunge ;
But when the heart's attorney ^a once is mute,
The client breaks, as desperate in his suit.

He sees her coming, and begins to glow,
Even as a dying coal revives with wind,
And with his bonnet hides his angry brow ;
Looks on the dull earth with disturbed mind ;
Taking no notice that she is so nigh,
For all askaunce he holds her in his eye.

O what a sight it was, wistly to view
How she came stealing to the wayward boy !
To note the fighting conflict of her hue !
How white and red each other did destroy !
But now her cheek was pale, and by and by
It flash'd forth fire, as lightning from the sky.

Now was she just before him as he sat,
And like a lowly lover down she kneels ;
With one fair hand she heaveth up his hat,
Her other tender hand his fair cheek feels :
His tenderer cheek receives her soft hand's print,
As apt as new-fallen snow takes any dint.

O what a war of looks was then between them !
Her eyes, petitioners, to his eyes suing ;

^a In 'Richard III.' we have—

"Why should calamity be full of words,
Windy attorneys to their client woes."

The tongue, in the passage before us, is the *attorney* to the heart.

His eyes saw her eyes as they had not seen them ;
 Her eyes woo'd still, his eyes disdain'd the wooing :
 And all this dumb play had his " acts made plain
 With tears, which, chorus-like, her eyes did rain.

Full gently now she takes him by the hand,
 A lily prison'd in a gaol of snow,
 Or ivory in an alabaster band ;
 So white a friend engirts so white a foe :
 This beauteous combat, wilful and unwilling,
 Show'd like two silver doves that sit a billing.

Once more the engine of her thoughts began :
 " O fairest mover on this mortal round,
 Would thou wert as I am, and I a man.
 My heart all whole as thine, thy heart my wound ;^b
 For one sweet look thy help I would assure thee,
 Though nothing but my body's bane would cure
 thee."

" Give me my hand," saith he, " why dost thou feel it ?"
 " Give me my heart," saith she, " and thou shalt have it ;
 O give it me, lest thy hard heart do steel it,
 And being steel'd, soft sighs can never grave it :^c
 Then love's deep groans I never shall regard,
 Because Adonis' heart hath made mine hard."

" For shame," he cries, " let go, and let me go ;
 My day's delight is past, my horse is gone,
 And 't is your fault I am bereft him so ;
 I pray you hence, and leave me here alone :
 For all my mind, my thought, my busy care,
 Is how to get my palfrey from the mare."

Thus she replies : " Thy palfrey, as he should,
 Welcomes the warm approach of sweet desire.

^a *His for its.*

^b Malone explains this " thy heart wounded as mine is."

^c *Grave—engrave.*

Affection is a coal that must be cool'd ;
Else, suffer'd, it will set the heart on fire :
The sea hath bounds, but deep desire hath none,
Therefore no marvel though thy horse be gone.

" How like a jade he stood, tied to the tree,
Servilely master'd with a leathern rein !
But when he saw his love, his youth's fair fee,
He held such petty bondage in disdain ;
Throwing the base thong from his bending crest,
Enfranchising his mouth, his back, his breast.

" Who sees his true love in her naked bed,
Teaching the sheets a whiter hue than white,
But, when his glutton eye so full hath fed,
His other agents aim at like delight ?
Who is so faint that dare not be so bold
To touch the fire, the weather being cold ?

" Let me excuse thy courser, gentle boy ;
And learn of him, I heartily beseech thee,
To take advantage on presented joy ;
Though I were dumb, yet his proceedings teach thee.
O learn to love ; the lesson is but plain,
And, once made perfect, never lost again."

" I know not love," quoth he, " nor will not know it,
Unless it be a boar, and then I chase it :
'T is much to borrow, and I will not owe it ;
My love to love is love but to disgrace it ;
For I have heard it is a life in death,
That laughs, and weeps, and all but with a breath.

" Who wears a garment shapeless and unfinish'd ?
Who plucks the bud before one leaf put forth ?
If springing things be any jot diminish'd,
They wither in their prime, prove nothing worth :
The colt that 's back'd and burthen'd being young
Loseth his pride, and never waxeth strong.

"You hurt my hand with wringing; let us part,
And leave this idle theme, this bootless chat:
Remove your siege from my unyielding heart:
To love's alarm it will not ope the gate.

Dismiss your vows, your feigned tears, your flattery;
For where a heart is hard, they make no battery."

"What! canst thou talk," quoth she, "hast thou a
tongue?"

O would thou hadst not, or I had no hearing!
Thy mermaid's voice^a hath done me double wrong;
I had my load before, now press'd with bearing:

Melodious discord, heavenly tune harsh sounding,
Ear's deep-sweet music, and heart's deep-sore wound
ing.

"Had I no eyes, but ears, my ears would love
That inward beauty and invisible;
Or, were I deaf, thy outward parts would move
Each part in me that were but sensible:

Though neither eyes nor ears, to hear nor see,
Yet should I be in love, by touching thee.

"Say, that the sense of feeling were bereft me,
And that I could not see, nor hear, nor touch,
And nothing but the very smell were left me,
Yet would my love to thee be still as much;
For from the still'tory of thy face excelling
Comes breath perfum'd, that breedeth love by
smelling.

"But O, what banquet wert thou to the taste,
Being nurse and feeder of the other four!
Would they not wish the feast might ever last,
And bid Suspicion double-lock the door?"

^a *Mermaid's voice.* *Mermaid* and *syren* were formerly used as synonymous.

Lest Jealousy, that sour unwelcome guest,
Should, by his stealing in, disturb the feast."

Once more the ruby-colour'd portal open'd,
Which to his speech did honey passage yield,
Like a red morn, that ever yet betoken'd
Wreck to the seaman, tempest to the field,
Sorrow to shepherds, woe unto the birds,
Gusts and foul flaws^a to herdmen and to herds.

This ill presage advisedly she marketh :
Even as the wind is hush'd before it raineth,
Or as the wolf doth grin before he barketh,
Or as the berry breaks before it staineth,
Or like the deadly bullet of a gun,
His meaning struck her ere his words begun.

And at his look she flatly falleth down,
For looks kill love, and love by looks reviveth :
A smile recures the wounding of a frown,
But blessed bankrupt, that by love so thriveth !
The silly boy, believing she is dead,
Claps her pale cheek, till clapping makes it red ;

And all-amaz'd brake off his late intent,
For sharply he did think to reprehend her,
Which cunning love did wittily prevent :
Fair fall the wit that can so well defend her !
For on the grass she lies as she were slain,
Till his breath breatheth life in her again.

He wrings her nose, he strikes her on the cheeks,
He bends her fingers, holds her pulses hard ;
He chafes her lips, a thousand ways he seeks
To mend the hurt that his unkindness marr'd ;
He kisses her : and she, by her good will,
Will never rise so he will kiss her still.

^a *Flaws* is here used in the sense of violent blasts.

The night of sorrow now is turn'd to day:
 Her two blue windows ^a faintly she upheaveth,
 Like the fair sun, when in his fresh array
 He cheers the morn, and all the world relieveth:
 And as the bright sun glorifies the sky,
 So is her face illumin'd with her eye;

Whose beams upon his hairless face are fix'd,
 As if from thence they borrow'd all their shine.
 Were never four such lamps together mix'd,
 Had not his clouded with his brows' repine;^b
 But hers, which thro' the crystal tears gave light,
 Shone like the moon in water seen by night.

"O, where am I?" quoth she, "in earth or heaven,
 Or in the ocean drench'd, or in the fire?
 What hour is this? or morn or weary even?
 Do I delight to die, or life desire?
 But now I liv'd, and life was death's annoy;
 But now I died, and death was lively joy.

"O thou didst kill me;—kill me once again:
 Thy eyes' shrewd tutor, that hard heart of thine,
 Hath taught them scornful tricks, and such disdain
 That they have murder'd this poor heart of mine;
 And these mine eyes, true leaders to their queen,
 But for thy piteous lips no more had seen.

"Long may they kiss each other, for this cure!
 O never let their crimson liveries wear!"

^a The windows are doubtless the eyelids, but the epithet blue is somewhat startling. We must remember that Shakspeare has described violets as—

"Sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes"

^b *Repine*. Used as a substantive. Chaucer employs *pine* in the same manner.

And as they last, their verdure still endure,
 To drive infection^a from the dangerous year!
 That the star-gazers, having writ on death,
 May say the plague is banish'd by thy breath.

"Pure lips, sweet seals in my soft lips imprinted,
 What bargains may I make, still to be sealing?
 To sell myself I can be well contented,
 So thou wilt buy, and pay, and use good dealing;
 Which purchase if thou make, for fear of slips,
 Set thy seal-manual on my wax-red lips.

"A thousand kisses buys my heart from me;
 And pay them at thy leisure, one by one.
 What is ten hundred touches unto thee?
 Are they not quickly told, and quickly gone?
 Say, for non-payment that the debt should double,
 Is twenty hundred kisses such a trouble?"

"Fair queen," quoth he, "if any love you owe me,
 Measure my strangeness^c with my unripe years;
 Before I know myself seek not to know me;
 No fisher but the ungrown fry forbears:
 The mellow plum doth fall, the green sticks fast,
 Or being early pluck'd is sour to taste.

"Look, the world's comforter, with weary gait,
 His day's hot task hath ended in the west:
 The owl, night's herald, shrieks,—'t is very late;
 The sheep are gone to fold, birds to their nest;

^a The custom of strewing houses with fragrant herbs was universal at a period when the constant recurrence of the plague habituated families to the use of what they considered preventives.

^b Here is one of the many traces of Shakspeare's legal studies—an allusion to the penalty for non-payment which formed the condition of a money bond.

^c *Strangeness*—coyness or bashfulness.

And coal-black clouds that shadow heaven's light
Do summon us to part, and bid good night.

"Now let me say 'good night,' and so say you;
If you will say so, you shall have a kiss."
"Good night," quoth she; and, ere he says "adieu,"
The honey see of parting tender'd is:
Her arms do lend his neck a sweet embrace;
Incorporate then they seem; face grows to face.

Till, breathless, he disjoin'd, and backward drew
The heavenly moisture, that sweet coral mouth,
Whose precious taste her thirsty lips well knew,
Whereon they surfeit yet complain on drouth:
He with her plenty press'd, she faint with dearth,
(Their lips together glued,) fall to the earth.

Now quick Desire hath caught the yielding prey,
And glutton-like she feeds yet never filleth;
Her lips are conquerors, his lips obey,
Paying what ransom the insulter willeth;
Whose vulture thought doth pitch the price so high,
That she will draw his lips' rich treasure dry.

And having felt the sweetness of the spoil,
With blindfold fury she begins to forage;
Her face doth reek and smoke, her blood doth boil,
And careless lust stirs up a desperate courage;
Planting oblivion, beating reason back,
Forgetting shame's pure blush, and honour's wrack.

Hot, faint, and weary, with her hard embracing,
Like a wild bird being tam'd with too much handling,
Or as the fleet-foot roe that's tir'd with chasing,
Or like the froward infant still'd with dandling,
He now obeys, and now no more resisteth,
While she takes all she can, not all she listeth.

What wax so frozen but dissolves with tempering,
 And yields at last to every light impression?^a
 Things out of hope are compass'd oft with venturing,
 Chiefly in love, whose leave^b exceeds commission:
 Affection faints not like a pale-fac'd coward,
 But then woos best when most his choice is froward.

When he did frown, O, had she then gave over,
 Such nectar from his lips she had not suck'd.
 Foul words and frowns must not repel a lover;
 What though the rose have prickles, yet 't is pluck'd:
 Were beauty under twenty locks kept fast
 Yet love breaks through, and picks them all at last.

For pity now she can no more detain him;
 The poor fool prays her that he may depart:
 She is resolv'd no longer to restrain him;
 Bids him farewell, and look well to her heart,
 The which, by Cupid's bow she doth protest,
 He carries thence incaged in his breast.

"Sweet boy," she says, "this night I'll waste in sorrow,
 For my sick heart commands mine eyes to watch.
 Tell me, love's master, shall we meet to-morrow?
 Say, shall we? shall we? wilt thou make the match?"
 He tells her, no; to-morrow he intends
 To hunt the boar with certain of his friends.

"The boar!" quoth she; whereat a sudden pale,
 Like lawn being spread upon the blushing rose,
 Usurps her cheeks; she trembles at his tale,
 And on his neck her yoking arms she throws:
 She sinketh down, still hanging by his neck,
 He on her belly falls, she on her back.

^a The soft wax upon which the seal attached to a legal instrument was impress'd required to be tempered before the impression was made upon it.

^b Leave—licence.

Now is she in the very lists of love,
 Her champion mounted for the hot encounter :
 All is imaginary she doth prove,
 He will not manage her, although he mount her ;
 That worse than Tantalus' is her annoy,
 To clip Elysium, and to lack her joy.

Even as poor birds, deceiv'd with painted grapes,^a
 Do surfeit by the eye, and pine the maw,
 Even so she languisheth in her mishaps,
 As those poor birds that helpless^b berries saw :
 The warm effects which she in him finds missing,
 She seeks to kindle with continual kissing.

But all in vain ; good queen, it will not be :
 She hath assay'd as much as may be prov'd ;
 Her pleading hath deserv'd a greater fee ;
 She's Love, she loves, and yet she is not lov'd.
 "Fie, fie," he says, "you crush me ; let me go ;
 You have no reason to withhold me so."

"Thou hadst been gone," quoth she, "sweet boy, ere this,
 But that thou told'st me thou wouldst hunt the boar.
 O be advis'd ! thou know'st not what it is
 With javelin's point a churlish swine to gore,
 Whose tushes never-sheath'd he whetteth still,
 Like to a mortal^c butcher, bent to kill.

"On his bow-back he hath a battle set
 Of bristly pikes, that ever threat his foes ;
 His eyes like glowworms shine when he doth fret :
 His snout digs sepulchres where'er he goes ;

^a The allusion is to the picture of Zenxis, mentioned by Pliny. We may observe that there was no English translation of Pliny so early as the date of this poem.

^b Helpless—that afford no help.

^c Mortal—deadly.

Being mov'd, he strikes whate'er is in his way,
And whom he strikes his cruel tushes slay

" His brawny sides, with hairy bristles arm'd,
Are better proof than thy spear's point can enter,
His short thick neck cannot be easily harm'd,
Being ireful on the lion he will venture
The thorny brambles and embracing bushes,
As fearful of him, part, through whom he rushes

" Alas, he nought esteems that face of thine,
To which Love's eyes pay tributary gazes,
Nor thy soft hands, sweet lips and crystal eyne,
Whose full perfection all the world amazes,
But having thee at vantage (wondrous dread!)
Would root these beauties as he roots the mead

' O, let him keep his loathsome cabin still!
Beauty hath nought to do with such foul fiends
Come not within his danger^a by thy will,
They that thrive well take counsel of their friends
When thou didst name the boar, not to dissemble,
I fear'd thy fortune, and my joints did tremble

' Didst thou not mark my face? Was it not white?
Sawst thou not signs of fear lurk in mine eye?
Grew I not faint? And fell I not downright?
Within my bosom, whereon thou dost lie,
My boding heart pants, beats and takes no rest,
But, like an earthquake shakes thee on my breast

' For where Love reigns disturbing Jealousy
Doth call himself Affection's sentinel
Gives false alarms suggesteth mutiny,
And in a peaceful hour doth cry, ' kill, kill, '

^a *Danger* — power of doing harm

Distempering gentle Love in his desire,
As air and water do abate the fire.

“ This sour informer, this hate-breeding^a spy,
This canker that eats up love’s tender spring,^b
This carry-tale, dissentious jealousy,
That sometime true news, sometime false doth bring,
Knocks at my heart, and whispers in mine ear,
That if I love thee I thy death should fear :

“ And, more than so, presenteth to mine eye
The picture of an angry-chafing boar,
Under whose sharp faugs on his back doth lie
An image like thyself, all stain’d with gore ;
Whose blood upon the fresh flowers being shed
Doth make them droop with grief, and hang the head.

“ What should I do, seeing thee so indeed,
That tremble at the imagination ?
The thought of it doth make my faint heart bleed,
And fear doth teach it divination :
I prophesy thy death, my living sorrow,
If thou encounter with the boar to-morrow.

“ But if thou needs wilt hunt, be rul’d by me ;
Uncouple at the timorous flying hare,
On at the fox, which lives by subtilty,
On at the roe, which no encounter dare :
Pursue these fearful creatures o’er the downs,
And on thy well-breath’d horse keep with thy hounds.

“ And when thou hast on foot the purblind hare,
Mark the poor wretch, to overshoot his troubles,
How he outruns the wind, and with what care
He cranks^c and crosses, with a thousand doubles :

^a Bate signifies strife.

^b Spring—bud or young shoot.

^c Cranks—winds.

The many *musls*^a through the which he goes
Are like a labyrinth to amaze his foes.

"Sometime he runs among a flock of sheep,
To make the cunning hounds mistake their smell,
And sometime where earth-delving conies keeps,^b
To stop the loud pursuers in their yell;
And sometime sorteth^c with a herd of deer;
Danger deviseth shifts; wit waits on fear:

"For there his smell with others being mingled,
The hot scent-snuffing hounds are driven to doubt,
Ceasing their clamorous cry till they have singled
With much ado the cold fault cleanly out;
Then do they spend their mouths: Echo replies,
As if another chase were in the skies.

"By this, poor Wat, far off upon a hill,
Stands on his hinder legs with listening ear,
To hearken if his foes pursue him still;
Anon their loud alarms he doth hear;
And now his grief may be compared well
To one sore sick that hears the passing-bell.

"Then shalt thou see the dew-bedabbled wretch
Turn, and return, indenting with the way;
Each envious briar his weary legs doth scratch,
Each shadow makes him stop, each murmur stay:
For misery is trodden on by many,
And being low never reliev'd by any.

"Lie quietly, and hear a little more;
Nay, do not struggle, for thou shalt not rise:

^a *Musls*. The term is explained in Markham's 'Gentlemen's Academy,' 1595—"We term the place where she [the hare] *museth*, her form; the place through which she goes to relief, her *musl*."

^b *Keep*—dwell.

^c *Sorteth*—consorteth

To make thee hate the hunting of the boar
Unlike myself thou bear'st me moralize.^a

Applying 'his to that, and so to so,
For love can comment upon every woe

• Where did I leave it — ' No matter where, quoth
he

Leave me, and then the story aptly ends
I might as spent — ' Why, what of that ?' quoth she.
• I — quoth he, ' expected of my friends,
And now 'tis dark and going I shall fall
In night quoth she, desire sees best of all

• But if thou fall, O then imagine this,
I'll enthrall thee with thee thy footing trips,
And all is but to rob thee of a kiss
Rhapsods make true men thieves, so do thy lips
Make the modest Dian cloudy and forlorn,
Let us should steal a kiss and die forsworn

Now of this dark night I perceive the reason
Cynthia's sun obscured by his liver shine,
Till finding nature be condemn'd of treason,
Let stealing moulds from heaven that were divine,
Wherein she framed thee in high heaven's despite,
To blame the sun by day and let by night

And therefore hath she brib'd the Destinies,
To cross the curious workmanship of nature,
To mingle beauty with infirmities
And to perfection with impure defeature,^b
Making it subject to the tyranny
Of mad mischances and much misery

• As burning fevers, agues pale and faint,
Like poisoning pestilence, and furies wood,^c

^a Moralize—comment

^b Wretched—mad
L. 2

The marrow-eating sickness, whose attainment
 Disorder breeds by heating of the blood :
 Surfeits, imposthumes, grief, and damn'd despair,
 Swear Nature's death for flaming thee so fair.

" And not the least of all these maladies,
 But in one minute's sight brings beauty under :
 Both favour, savour, hue, and qualities,
 Whereat the impartial gazer late did wonder,
 Are on the sudden wasted, thaw'd, and done,"
 As mountain-snow melts with the midday sun.

" Therefore, despite of fruitless chastity,
 Love-lacking vestals, and self-loving nuns,
 That on the earth would breed a scarcity
 And barren dearth of daughters and of sons,
 Be prodigal : the lamp that burns by night
 Dries up his oil to lend the world his light.

" What is thy body but a swallowing grave,
 Seeming to bury that posterity
 Which by the rights of time thou needs must have,
 If thou destroy them not in dark obscurity ?
 If so, the world will hold thee in disdain,
 Sith in thy pride so fair a hope is slain.

" So in thyself thyself art made away ;
 A mischief worse than civil home-bred strife,
 Or theirs whose desperate hands themselves do slay,
 Or butcher-sire, that reaves his son of life.
 Foul cankering rust the hidden treasure fets,
 But gold that 's put to use more gold begets."

" Nay, then," quoth Adon, " you will fall again
 Into your idle over-handled theme ;

" Done—destroyed.

The kiss I gave you is bestow'd in vain,
And all in vain you strive against the stream ;
For by this black-fac'd night, desire's foul nurse,
Your treatise makes me like you worse and worse.

" If love have lent you twenty thousand tongues,
And every tongue more moving than your own,
Bewitching like the wanton mermaid's songs,
Yet from mine ear the tempting tune is blown ;
For know, my heart stands armed in mine ear,
And will not let a false sound enter there ;

" Lest the deceiving harmony should run
Into the quiet closure of my breast ;
And then my little heart were quite undone,
In his bedchamber to be barr'd of rest.
No, lady, no ; my heart longs not to groan,
But soundly sleeps, while now it sleeps alone.

" What have you urg'd that I cannot reprove ?
The path is smooth that leadeth on to danger ;
I hate not love, but your device in love,
That lends embracements unto every stranger.
You do it for increase ; O strange excuse !
When reason is the bawd to lust's abuse.

" Call it not love, for love to heaven is fled,
Since sweating lust on earth usurp'd his name ;
Under whose simple semblance he hath fed
Upon fresh beauty, blotting it with blame ;
Which the hot tyrant stains, and soon bereaves,
As caterpillars do the tender leaves.

" Love comforteth like sunshine after rain,
But lust's effect is tempest after sun ;
Love's gentle spring doth always fresh remain,
Lust's winter comes ere summer half be done.

Love surfeits not ; lust like a glutton dies :
Love is all truth ; lust full of forged lies.

" More I could tell, but more I dare not say ;
The text is old, the orator too green.
Therefore, in sadness, now I will away ;
My face is full of shame, my heart of teen ;^a
Mine ears that to your wanton talk attended
Do burn themselves for having so offended."

With this he breaketh from the sweet embrace
Of those fair arms which bound him to her breast,
And homeward through the dark laund^b runs apace ;
Leaves Love upon her back deeply distress'd.
Look how a bright star shooteth from the sky.
So glides he in the night from Venus' eye ;

Which after him she darts, as off on shore
Gazing upon a late-embarked friend,
Till the wild waves will have him seen no more
Whose ridges with the meeting clouds contend ,
So did the merciless and pitchy night
Fold in the object that did feed her sight.

Whereat amaz'd, as one that unaware
Hath dropp'd a precious jewel in the flood.
Or 'stonish'd as night-wanderers often are,
Their light blown out in some mistrustful wood ;
Even so confounded in the dark she lay,
Having lost the fair discovery of her way.

And now she beats her heart, whereat it groans,
That all the neighbour-caves, as seeming troubled
Make verbal repetition of her moans ;
Passion on passion deeply is redoubled :

^a Teen—grief.

^b Laund—lawn.

"Ah me!" she cries, and twenty times, "woe, woe!"
And twenty echoes twenty times cry so

She, marking them begins a wailing note,
And sings extemporarily a woeful ditty,
How love makes young men thrill, and old men
dote,

How love is wise in folly, foolish-witty
Her heavy anthem still concludes in woe,
And still the choir of echoes answer "so."

Her song was tedious, and outwore the night,
For lovers hours are long, though seeming short
If pleas'd themselves, others, they think, delight
In such like circumstance, with such like sport
Their copious stories, oftentimes begun,
End without audience, and are never done

For who hath she to spend the night withal,
But idle sounds resembling parasites
Like shrill tongued flatterers answering every call,
Soothing the humour of fantastic wits?

She says, "it is so" they answer all, "it is so,"
And would say after her, if she said "no"

Lo! here the gentle Luk, weary of rest
Lies on his moist cabinet mounts up on high,
And wakes the morning from whose silver breast
The sun riseth in his majesty,

Who'd th' the world so gloriously behold,
The courts and hills seem burnish'd gold

Venus salutes him with this fair good morrow
"O thou clear god, and patron of all light,

"Adon!" So the choir of Echoes, according to the
rules of melic instruction, answers in more correct

From whom each lamp and shining star doth borrow
 The beauteous influence that makes him bright,
 There lives a son, that suck'd an earthly mother,
 May lend thee light, as thou dost lend to other."

This said, she hasteth to a myrtle grove,
 Musing the morning is so much o'erworn,
 And yet she hears no tidings of her love :
 She hearkens for his hounds, and for his horn :
 Anon she hears them chant it lustily,
 And all in haste she coasteth " to the cry.

And as she runs, the bushes in the way
 Some catch her by the neck, some kiss her face,
 Some twine about her thigh to make her stay ;
 She wildly breaketh from their strict embrace,
 Like a milch doe, whose swelling dugs do ache,
 Hasting to feed her fawn, hid ~~in~~ some brake.

By this she hears the hounds are at a bay,
 Whereat she starts, like one that spies an adder
 Wreath'd up in fatal folds, just in his way,
 The fear whereof doth make him shake and shudder ;
 Even so the timorous yelping of the hounds
 Appals her senses, and her spright confounds.

For now she knows it is no gentle chase,
 But the blunt boar, rough bear, or lion proud,
 Because the cry remaineth in one place,
 Where fearfully the dogs exclaim aloud :
 Finding their enemy to be so cunst,
 They all strain court'sy who shall cope him first.

This dismal cry rings sadly in her ear,
 Through which it enters to surprise her heart,

* Coasteth—advanceth

Who, overcome by doubt and bloodless fear,
 With cold-pale weakness numbs each feeling part :
 Like soldiers, when their captain once doth yield,
 They basely fly, and dare not stay the field.

Thus stands she in a trembling ecstasy ;
 Till, cheering up her senses sore-dismay'd,
 She tells them 't is a causeless fantasy,
 And childish error that they are afraid ;
 Bids them leave quaking, bids them fear no more ;—
 And with that word she spied the hunted boar ;

Whose frothy mouth, hepainted all with red,
 Like milk and blood being mingled both together,
 A second fear through all her sinews spread,
 Which madly hurries her she knows not whither :
 This way she runs, and now she will no further,
 But back retires, to rate the boar for murder.

A thousand spleens bear her a thousand ways ;
 She treads the path that she untreads again ;
 Her more than haste is mated^a with delays,
 Like the proceedings of a drunken brain,
 Full of respect,^b yet nought at all respecting,
 In hand with all things, nought at all effecting.

Here kennell'd in a brake she finds a hound,
 And asks the weary caitiff for his master ;
 And there another licking of his wound,
 'Gainst venom'd sores the only sovereign plaster ;
 And here she meets another sadly scowling,
 To whom she speaks, and he replies with howling.

When he hath ceas'd his ill-resounding noise,
 Another flap-mouth'd mourner, black and grim,

^a *Mated*—confounded.

^b *Respect*—circumspection.

Against the welkin volleys out his voice ;
 Another and another answer him,
 Clapping their proud tails to the ground below,
 Shaking their scratch'd ears, bleeding as they go.

Look, how the world's poor people are amaz'd
 At apparitions, signs, and prodigies,
 Whereon with fearful eyes they long have gaz'd,
 Infusing them with dreadful prophecies :
 So she at these sad signs draws up her breath,
 And, sighing it again, exclaims on Death.

" Hard-favour'd tyrant, ugly, meagre, lean,
 hateful divorce of love," (thus chides she Death,)
 " Grim-ginning ghost, earth's worm, what dost thou
 mean

To stifle beauty, and to steal his breath,
 Who when he liv'd, his breath and beauty set
 Gloss on the rose, smell to the violet ?

" If he be dead,—O no, it cannot be,
 Seeing his beauty, thou shouldst strike at it—
 O yes, it may ; thou hast no eyes to see,
 But hatefully at random dost thou hit.
 Thy mark is feeble age ; but thy false dart
 Mistakes that aim, and cleaves an infant's heart.

" Hadst thou but bid beware, then he had spoke,
 And hearing him thy power had lost his^a power.
 The Destinies will curse thee for this stroke ;
 They bid thee crop a weed, thou pluck'st a flower :
 Love's golden arrow at him should have fled,
 And not Death's ebony dart, to strike him dead.

" Dost thou drink tears, that thou provok'st such weeping ?
 What may a heavy groan advantage thee ?

^a His fate.

Why hast thou cast into eternal sleeping
 Those eyes that taught all other eyes to see?
 Now Nature cares not for thy mortal vigour,
 Since her best work is ruin'd with thy rigour

Here overcome, as one full of despair,
 She would^a her eyelids who like sluices, stopp'd
 The crystal tide that from her two cheeks fair
 In the sweet channel of her bosom dropp'd
 But through the floodgates breaks the silver rain,
 And with his stroug course opens them again

O how her eyes and tears did lend and lend
 Her eyes seen in the tears, tears in the eyes
 Both crystals, where they view'd each other's sorrow,
 Sorrow that friendly sighs sought still to drive,
 But like a stormy day, now wind now rain,
 Sighs dry her cheeks, tears make them wet again

And all passions thine her constant war
 As striving who shall best become her bed
 All entertain'd, each passion labours so
 That every present sorrow seemeth chafed,
 But none is best, then join they all together,
 Like many clouds consulting for full weather

By this full off she hears some huntmen holla,^b
 A nurse's singing ne'er pleas'd her like so well
 The due imagination she did follow
 This sound of hope doth labour to expel,
 For now reviving joy bids her rejoice,
 And flutters her it is Adonis' voice

^a *Would*—lowered

^b *Holla*—holla was not quite the same word as holla which we have already noticed although the usual spelling of this word in the passage before us is holla

Whereat her tears began to turn their tide,
 Being prison'd in her eye, like pearls in glass;
 Yet sometimes falls an orient drop beside,
 Which her cheek melts, as scorning it should pass,
 To wash the foul face of the sluttish ground,
 Who is but drunken when she seemeth drown'd.

O hard-believing love, how strange it seems
 Not to believe, and yet too credulous!
 Thy weal and woe are both of them extremes,
 Despair and hope make thee ridiculous:
 The one doth flatter thee in thoughts unlikely,
 In likely thoughts the other kills thee quickly.

Now she unweaves the web that she hath wrought;
 Adonis lives, and Death is not to blame;
 It was not she that call'd him all-to^a naught;
 Now she adds honours to his hateful name;
 She clepes him king of graves, and grave for kings,
 Imperious supreme of all mortal things.

"No, no," quoth she, "sweet Death, I did but jest;
 Yet pardon me, I felt a kind of fear,
 Whenas I met the boar, that bloody beast,
 Which knows no pity, but is still severe;
 Then, gentle shadow (truth I must confess),
 I rail'd on thee, fearing my love's decease.

"'T is not my fault: the boar provok'd my tongue;
 Be wreak'd on him, invisible commander;
 'T is he, foul creature, that hath done thee wrong;
 I did but act, he 's author of thy slander:
 Grief hath two tongues, and never woman yet,
 Could rule them both, without ten women's wit."

^a *All-to—entirely—altogether.*

Thus, hoping that Adonis is alive,
Her rash suspect she doth extenuate ;
And that his beauty may the better thrive,
With Death she humbly doth insinuate ;
Tells him of trophies, statues, tombs ; and stories
His victories, his triumphs, and his glories.

" O Jove," quoth she, " how much a fool was I,
To be of such a weak and silly mind,
To wail his death who lives, and must not die,
Till mutual overthrow of mortal kind !

For he being dead, with him is beauty slain,
And, beauty dead, black chaos comes again.

" Fie, fie, fond love, thou art so full of fear
As one with treasure laden, hemm'd with thieves ;
Trifles, unwitnessed with eye or ear,
Thy coward heart with false bethinking grieves."

Even at this word she hears a merry horn,
Whereat she leaps that was but late forlorn.

As falcon to the lure away she flies ;
The grass stoops not, she treads on it so light ;
And in her haste unfortunately spies
The foul boar's conquest on her fair delight ;
Which seen, her eyes, as murder'd with the view,
Like stars asham'd of day, themselves withdrew.

Or, as the snail, whose tender horns being hit,
Shrinks backward in his shelly cave with pain,
And there, all smother'd up, in shade doth sit,
Long after fearing to creep forth again ;
So, at his bloody view, her eyes are fled
Into the deep dark cabins of her head ;

Where they resign their office and their light
To the disposing of her troubled brain ;

Who bids them still consort with ugly night,
And never wound the heart with looks again ;
Who, like a king perplexed in his throne,
By their suggestion gives a deadly groan,

Whereat each tributary subject quakes :
As when the wind, imprison'd in the ground,
Struggling for passage, earth's foundation shakes,
Which with cold terror doth men's minds confound,
The mutiny each part doth so surprise,
That from their dark beds once more leap her eyes ;

And, being open'd, threw unwilling light
Upon the wide wound that the boar had trench'd
In his soft flank ; whose wonted lily white
With purple tears, that his wound wept, was drench'd .
No flower was nigh, no grass, herb, leaf, or weed,
But stole his blood, and seem'd with him to bleed.

This solemn sympathy poor Venus noteth ;
Over one shoulder doth she hang her head ;
Dumbly she passions, frantically she doteth ;
She thinks he could not die, he is not dead.
Her voice is stopp'd, her joints forget to bow ;
Her eyes are mad that they have wept till now.

Upon his hurt she looks so steadfastly
That her sight dazzling makes the wound seem three ;
And then she reprehends her mangling eye
That makes more gashes where no breach should be :
His face seems twain, each several limb is doubled ;
For oft the eye mistakes, the brain being troubled.

" My tongue cannot express my grief for one,
And yet," quoth she, " behold two Adons dead !
My sighs are blown away, my salt tears gone,
Mine eyes are turn'd to fire, my heart to lead :

Heavy heart's lead melt at mine eyes' red fire !
So shall I die by drops of hot desire.

" Alas, poor world, what treasure hast thou lost !
What face remains alive that 's worth the viewing ?
Whose tongue is music now ? what canst thou boast
Of things long since, or anything ensuing ?
The flowers are sweet, their colours fresh and trim ;
But true-sweet beauty liv'd and died with him.

" Bonnet nor veil henceforth no creature wear !
Nor sun nor wind will ever strive to kiss you :
Having no fair^a to lose, you need not fear ;
The sun doth scorn you, and the wind doth hiss you :
But when Adonis liv'd, sun and sharp air
Lurk'd like two thieves to rob him of his fair ;

" And therefore would he put his bonnet on,
Under whose him the gaudy sun would peep ;
The wind would blow it off, and, being gone,
Play with his locks ; then would Adonis weep :
And straight, in pity of his tender years,
They both would strive who first should dry his tears

" To see his face the lion walk'd along
Behind some hedge, because he would not fear him :
To recreate himself, when he hath sung,
The tiger would be tame and gently hear him :
If he had spoke the wolf would leave his prey,
And never fright the silly lamb that day.

" When he beheld his shadow in the brook
The fishes spread on it their golden gills ;
When he was by the birds such pleasure took
That some would sing, some other in their bills

^a Fair—beauty.

Would bring him mulberries, and ripe-red cherries,
He fed them with his sight, they him with berries.

"But this foul, grim, and urchin-snouted^a boar,
Whose downward eye still looketh for a grave,
Ne'er saw the beauteous livery that he wore:
Witness the entertainment that he gave;
If he did see his face, why then I know
He thought to kiss him, and hath kill'd him so.

"'T is true, 't is true; thus was Adonis slain;
He ran upon the boar with his sharp spear,
Who did not whet his teeth at him again,
But by a kiss thought to persuade him there;
And nuzzling in his flank the loving swine
Sheath'd, unaware, the tusk in his soft groin.

"Had I been tooth'd like him I must confess
With kissing him I should have kill'd him first;
But he is dead, and never did he bles-
My youth with his; the more am I accurst."
With this she falleth in the place she stood,
And stains her face with his congealed blood.

She looks upon his lips, and they are pale;
She takes him by the hand, and that is cold;
She whispers in his ears a heavy tale,
As if they heard the woeful words she told:
She lifts the coffer-lids that close his eyes,
Where, lo! two lamps, burnt out, in darkness lies:

Two glasses where herself herself beheld
A thousand times, and now no more reflect;
Their virtue lost, wherein they late excell'd,
And every beauty robb'd of his effect:

^a *Urchin-snouted*—with the snout of the urchin, or hedge-hog.

• Wonder of time, quoth she, • this is my spite,
That you being dead the day should yet be light

• Since thou art dead, lo! here I prophesy,
Sorrow on love hereafter shall attend,
It shall be wanted on with jealousy,
And sweet beginning, but unsavoury end,
Neither settled equally, but high or low,
That all love's pleasure shall not match his woe.

It shall be fickle, false, and full of fraud,
Bud and be blasted in a breathing while,
The bottom poison, and the top o'erstraw'd
With sweets that shall the truest sight beguile.
The strongest body shall it make most weak,
Strike the wise dumb, and teach the fool to speak.

• It shall be sparing, and too full of not,
Feigning decreit age to tread the measures,^a
The stinging ruffian shall it keep in quiet,
Pluck down the rich, enrich the poor with treasures.
It shall be raging mad, and silly mild,
Make the young old, the old become a child

It shall suspect where is no cause of fear,
It shall not fear where it should most mistrust,
It shall be merciful, and too severe,
And most deceiving when it seems most just,
Pervers: it shall be where it shows most toward,
Put fear to valour, courage to the coward

• It shall be cause of war and dire events,
And set dissension twixt the son and sire,
Subject and servile to all discontents,
As dry combustion matter is to fire,
Sith in his prime death doth my love destroy,
They that love best then lovers shall not enjoy "

^a *O'erstraw'd*—o'erstrewn

^b *Measures*—grave dances suited to age

By this, the boy that by her side lay kill'd
Was melted like a vapour from her sight,
And in his blood that on the ground lay spill'd,
A purple flower sprung up, chequer'd with white,
Resembling well his pale cheeks, and the blood
Which in round drops upon their whiteness stood.

She bows her head, the new sprung flower to smell,
Comparing it to her Adonis' breath;
And says, within her bosom it shall dwell,
Since he himself is rest from her by death:
She crops the stalk, and in the breach appears
Green dropping sap, which she compares to tears.

"Poor flower," quoth she, "this was thy father's guise,
(Sweet issue of a more sweet smelling sire,)
For every little grief to wet his eyes:
To grow unto himself was his desire,
And so 't is thine; but know, it is as good
To wither in my breast as in his blood.

"Here was thy father's bed, here in my breast;
Thou art the next of blood, and 't is thy right:
Lo! in this hollow cradle take thy rest,
My throbbing heart shall rock thee day and night:
There shall not be one minute in an hour
Wherein I will not kiss my sweet love's flower."

Thus weary of the world, away she hies,
And yokes her silver doves; by whose swift aid
Their mistress mounted, through the empty skies
In her light chariot quickly is convey'd,
Holding their course to Paphos, where their queen
Means to inure herself, and not be seen.

END OF VENUS AND ADONIS.



RIP
OF
MURDER



TO THE
 RIGHT HONOURABLE HENRY WRIOTHESLEY,
 EARL OF SOUTHAMPTON, AND BARON OF TITCHFIELD.

THE love I dedicate to your Lordship is without end, whereof this pamphlet, without beginning, is but a superfluous moiety.^a The warrant I have of your honourable disposition, not the worth of my untutored lines, makes it assure / of acceptance. What I have done is yours, what I have to do is yours; being part in all I have, devoted yours. Were my worth greater my duty would show greater: meantime, as it is, it is bound to your Lordship; to whom I wish long life, still lengthened with all happiness.

Your Lordship's in all duty,

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

^a *Moiety*. In 'Henry IV.,' Part I., and in 'Lea,' Shakspeare uses *moiety* as it is here used, meaning a portion, not a half

THE ARGUMENT.

LUCIUS TARQUINIUS (for his excessive pride surnamed *Superbus*), after he had caused his own father in law, *Servius Tullius*, to be cruelly murdered, and contrary to the Roman laws and customs not requiring or staying for the people's suffrages, had possessed himself of the kingdom went accompanied with his sons and other noblemen of Rome to besiege *Ardea*. During which siege the principal men of the army meeting one evening at the tent of *Sextus Tarquinius*, the king's son, in their discourses after supper, every one commended the virtues of his own wife, among whom, *Collatinus* extolled the incomparable chastity of his wife *Lucretia*. In that pleasant humour they all posted to Rome, and intending by their secret and sudden arrival to make trial of that which every one had before avouched only. *Collatinus* finds his wife (though it were late in the night) spinning amongst her maids: the other ladies were all found dancing and revelling, or in several disports. Whereupon the noblemen yielded *Collatinus* the victory and his wife the fame. At that time *Sextus Tarquinius* being inflamed with *Lucrece's* beauty yet smothering his passions for the present, departed with the rest back to the camp, from whence he shortly after privily withdrew himself, and was (according to his estate) royally entertained and lodged by *Lucrece* at *Collatium*. The same night he treacherously stealeth into her chamber, violently ravished her and early in the morning speedeth away. *Lucrece*, in this lamentable plight, hastily despatcheth messengers, one to Rome for her father, another to the camp for *Collatine*. They came, the one accompanied with *Junius Brutus*, the other with *Publius Valerius*. And finding *Lucrece* attired in mourning habit, demanded the cause of her sorrow. She, first taking an oath of them for her revenge revealed the actor, and whole manner of his dealing, and withal suddenly stabbed herself. Which done, with one consent they all vowed to root out the whole hated family of the *Tarquins*, and, bearing the dead body to Rome, *Brutus* acquainted the people with the doer and manner of the vile deed, with a bitter invective against the tyranny of the king: wherewith the people were so moved, that with one consent and a general acclamation the *Tarquins* were all exiled, and the state government changed from kings to consuls.

THE RAPE OF LUCRECE.

From the besieged Ardea all in post,
 Borne by the trustless wings of false desire,
 Lust-breathed Tarquin leaves the Roman host,
 And to Collatium bears the lightless fire
 Which, in pale embers hid, lurks to aspire,
 And girdle with embracing flames the waist
 Of Collatine's fair love, Lucrece the chaste.

Haply that name of chaste unhapp'ly set
 This lateless edge on his keen appetite ;
 When Collatine unwisely did not let ^a
 To praise the clear unmatched red and white
 Which triumph'd in that sky of his delight,
 Where mortal stars, as bright as heaven's beauties,
 With pure aspects did him peculiar duties.

For he the night before, in Tarquin's tent,
 Unlock'd the treasure of his happy state ;
 What priceless wealth the heavens had him lent
 In the possession of his beauteous mate ;
 Reckoning his fortune at such high-proud rate,
 That kings might be espoused to more fame,
 But king nor peer to such a peerless dame.

O happiness enjoy'd but of a few !
 And, if possess'd, as soon decay'd and done ^b
 As is the morning's silver-melting dew

^a *Let*—forbear.

^b *Dime*. The word is here used as in a previous passage of the 'Venus and Adonis.'—

" Wasted, thaw'd, and done,
 As mountain-snow melts with the midday sun "

Against the golden splendour of the sun !
 An expir'd date, cancell'd ere well begun :
 Honour and beauty, in the owner's arms,
 Are weakly fortress'd from a world of harms.

Beauty itself doth of itself persuade
 The eyes of men without an orator ;
 What needeth then apologies be made
 To set forth that which is so singular ?
 Or why is Collatine the publisher
 Of that rich jewel he should keep unknown
 From thievish ears, because it is his own ?

Perchance his boast of Lucrece' sovereignty
 Suggested ^a this proud issue of a king ;
 For by our ears our hearts oft tainted be :
 Perchance that envy of so rich a thing,
 Braving compare, disdainfully did sting
 His high-pitch'd thoughts, ^b that meaner men should
 vaunt
 That golden hap which their superiors want.

But some untimely thought did instigate
 His all-too-timeless speed, if none of those :
 His honour, his affairs, his friends, his state,
 Neglected all, with swift intent he goes
 To quench the coal which in his liver glows
 O rash false heat, wrapp'd in repentant cold,
 Thy hasty spring still blasts, ^b and ne'er grows old !

When at Collatium this false lord arriv'd,
 Well was he welcom'd by the Roman dame,
 Within whose face beauty and virtue shinn'd
 Which of them both should underprop her fame :
 When virtue chagg'd, beauty would blush for shame ;

^a Suggested—tempted.

^b L. 105 is here used as a verb instead

When beauty boasted blushes in despite
Virtue would stain that ore^a with silver white

But beauty, in that white intitled,^b
From Venus' doves doth challenge that fair field
Then virtue claims from beauty beauty's red,
Which virtue gave the golden age to gild
Their silver cheeks, and call'd it then their shield,
Teaching them thus to use it in the fight,—
When shame assail'd the red should fence the white.

This heraldry in Lucrece' face was seen,
Argued by beauty's red, and virtue's white
Of either's colour was the other queen,
Proving from world's minority their right
Yet then ambition makes them still to fight,
The sovereignty of either being so great,
That oft they interchange each other's seat

This silent war of lilies and of roses
Which Fuquin view'd in her fair face's field,
In their pure ranks his traitor eye encloses,
Where, lest between them both it should be kill'd,
The coward captive vanquished doth yield
To those two armies that would let him go,
Rather than triumph in so false a foe

^a O — If I have us — its stain is this —

Virtue would stain that ore with silver white

The original has *ore*. Malone has suggested but I does not
at all suit the sense in that the word intitled was perhaps
or or *gold*, to which the next comparison of the colour of a
blush. We have no doubt whatever of the matter. The lines
in the subsequent stanza complete the heraldic illusion —

^c Then virtue claims from beauty beauty's red,

Which virtue gave the golden age to gild

Their silver cheeks, and call'd it then their shield.

^b Intitled—having it's title in

Now thinks he that her husband's shallow tongue
 (The niggard prodigal that prais'd her so)
 In that high task hath done her beauty wrong,
 Which far exceeds his barren skill to show
 Therefore that praise which Collatine doth owe,^a
 Enchanted Tarquin answers with surmise,
 In silent wonder of still-gazing eyes

This earthly saint, adored by this devil,
 Little suspecteth the false worshipper,
 For unstain'd thoughts do seldom dream on evil,
 Birds never hind no secret bushes fear
 So guiltless she securely gives good cheer
 And reverend welcome to her princely guest,
 Whose inward ill no outward harm express'd

For that he colour'd with his high estate,
 Hiding base sin in plants of majesty,
 That nothing in him seem'd inordinate,
 Save sometime too much wonder of his eye,
 Which, having all, all could not satisfy,
 But poorly rich, so wanteth in his store
 That cloy'd with much he pineth still for more

But she, that never cop'd with stranger eyes,
 Could pick no meaning from their parling^b looks,
 Nor read the subtle shining secrecies
 Writ in the glassy margents of such books,
 She touch'd no unknown baits, nor fear'd no hooks;
 Nor could she moralize^c his wanton sight
 More than his eyes were open'd to the light

He stories to her ears her husband's fame,
 Won in the fields of fruitful Italy,
 And decks with praises Collatine's high name,

^a The object of praise which Collatine doth possess

^b Parling—speaking

^c Moralize—interpret

Made glorious by his manly chivalry,
 With bruised arms and wreaths of victory ;
 Her joy with heav'd-up hand she doth express,
 And, wordless, so greets heaven for his success.

Far from the purpose of his coming thither,
 He makes excuses for his being there.
 No cloudy show of stormy blustering weather
 Doth yet in his fair welkin once appear ;
 Till sable Night, mother of Dread and Fear,
 Upon the world dim darkness doth display,
 And in her vaulty prison stows the day.

For then is Tarquin brought unto his bed,
 Intending ^a weariness with heavy spright ;
 For, after supper, long he questioned ^b
 With modest Lucrece, and wore out the night :
 Now leaden slumber with life's strength doth fight ;
 And every one to rest himself betakes,
 Save thieves, ^a and cares, and troubled minds, that
 wakes.

As one of which doth Tarquin lie revolving
 The sundry dangers of his will's obtaining ;
 Yet ever to obtain his will resolving,
 Though weak-built hopes persuade him to abstaining ,
 Despair to gain doth traffic oft for gaining ;
 And when great treasure is the meed propos'd,
 Though death be adjunct, there 's no death suppos'd.

Those that much covet are with gain so fond,
 That what they have not, that which they possess
 They scatter and unloose it from their bond,^c

^a *Intending*—pretending. ^b *Questioned*—conversed

^c The meaning, though obscurely expressed, is that the covetous are so fond of gaining what they have not, that they scatter and unloose from their bond (safe hold) that which they possess.

And so, by hoping more, they have but less;
Or, gaining more, the profit of excess
Is but to surfeit, and such griefs sustain,
That they prove bankrupt in this poor-rich gain.

The aim of all is but to nurse the life
With honour, wealth, and ease, in waning age;
And in this aim there is such thwarting strife,
That one for all, or all for one we gage;
As life for honour in fell battles' rage;
Honour for wealth; and oft that wealth doth cost
The death of all, and all together lost.

So that in vent'ring ill we leave to be
The things we are, for that which we expect;
And this ambitious soul infirmity,
In having much, torments us with defect
Of that we have: so then we do neglect
The thing we have, and, all for want of wit,
Make something nothing, by augmenting it.

Such hazard now must doting Tarquin make,
Pawning his honour to obtain his lust;
And for himself himself he must forsake:
Then where is truth if there be no self trust?
When shall he think to find a stranger just,
When he himself himself confounds, betrays
To slanderous tongues, and wretched hateful days?

Now stole upon the time the dead of night,
When heavy sleep had clos'd up mortal eyes:
No comfortable star did lend his light,
No noise but owls' and wolves' death-boding cries;
Now serves the season that they may surprise
The silly lambs, pure thoughts are dead and
still,
While lust and murder wake to stain and kill.

And now this lustful lord leav'd from his bed,
 Throwing his mantle rudely o'er his arm,
 Is muddily toss'd between desire and dread,
 Th' one sweetly flatters, th' other feareth harm;
 But honest Fear bewitch'd with lust's foul charm,
 Doth too too oft betake him to retire,
 Beaten away by brain-sick rude Desire

His falchion on a flint he softly smiteth,
 That from the cold stone spails of fire do fly,
 Whereat a waxen torch forthwith he lighteth,
 Which must be lode-star to his lustful eye,
 And to the flame thus speaks advisedly
 "As from this cold flint I enforced this fire,
 So Lucrece must I force to my desire

Here pale with fear he doth premeditate
 The dangers of his loathsome enterprise,
 And in his inward mind he doth debate
 What following sorrow may on this arise,
 Then looking scornfully, he doth despise
 His naked armour of still-slaughter'd lust,
 And justly thus controls his thoughts unjust

'Fair torch, burn out thy light and lend it not
 To darken her whose light excelleth thine!
 And die unhallow'd thoughts, before you blot
 With your uncleanness that which is divine!
 Offer pure incense to so pure a shrine
 Let fair humanity abhor the deed
 That spots and stains love's modest snow-white
 weed'

"O shame to knighthood and to shining arms!
 O foul dishonour to my household's grave!
 O impious act, including all foul hums!

A martial man to be soft fancy's slave;^a
 True valour still a true respect should have;
 Then my digression^b is so vile, so base,
 That it will live engraven in my face.

" Yea, though I die, the scandal will survive,
 And be an eyesore in my golden coat;
 Some loathsome dash the herald will contrive,
 To cipher me how fondly I did dote;
 That my posterity, sham'd with the note,
 Shall curse my bones, and hold it for no sin
 To wish that I their father had not been.

" What win I if I gain the thing I seek?
 A dream, a breath, a froth of fleeting joy:
 Who buys a minute's mirth to wail a week?
 Or sells eternity to get a toy?
 For one sweet grape who will the vine destroy?
 Or what fond beggar, but to touch the crown,
 Would with the sceptre straight be stricken down?

" If Collatinus dream of my intent
 Will he not wake, and in a desperate rage
 Post hither, this vile purpose to prevent?
 This siege that hath engirt his marriage,
 This blur to youth, this sorrow to the sage,
 This dying virtue, this surviving shame,
 Whose crime will bear an ever-during blame?

" O what excuse can my invention make,
 When thou shalt charge me with so black a deed?
 Will not my tongue be mute, my frail joints shake?
 Mine eyes forego their light, my false heart bleed?
 The guilt being great the fear doth still exceed;
 And extreme fear can neither fight nor fly,
 But, coward-like, with trembling terror die.

^a *Fancy's slave*—love's slave

^b *Digression* is here used in the sense of *transgression*.

" Had Collatinus kill'd my son or sire,
Or lain in ambush to betray my life,
Or were he not my dear friend, this desire
Might have excuse to work upon his wife ;
As in revenge or quittal of such strife :
But as he is my kinsman, my dear friend,
The shame and fault finds no excuse nor end.

" Shameful it is ;—ay, if the fact be known :
Hateful it is ;—there is no hate in loving :
I 'll beg her love ;—but she is not her own ;
The worst is but denial, and reproving :
My will is strong, past reason's weak removing.
Who fears a sentence or an old man's saw
Shall by a painted cloth be kept in awe."

Thus, graceless, holds he disputation
'Tween frozen conscience and hot-burning will,
And with good thoughts makes dispensation,
Urging the worser sense for vantage still ;
Which in a moment doth confound and kill
All pure effects, and doth so far proceed,
That what is vile shows like a virtuous deed.

Quoth he, " She took me kindly by the hand,
And gaz'd for tidings in my eager eyes,
Fearing some hard news from the warlike hand
Where her beloved Collatinus lies.
O how her fear did make her colour rise !
First red as roses that on lawn we lay,
Then white as lawn, the roses took away.*

" And how her hand, in my hand being lock'd,
Forc'd it to tremble with her loyal fear ;
Which struck her sad, and then it faster rock'd,

* Took away—being taken away.

Until her husband's welfare she did hear;
 Whereat she smiled with so sweet a cheer,
 That had Narcissus seen her as she stood,
 Self-love had never drown'd him in the flood.

"Why hunt I then for colour or excuses?
 All orators are dumb when beauty pleadeth;
 Poor wretches have renoise in poor abuses;
 Love thrives not in the heart that shadows dreadeth:
 Affection is my captain, and he leadeth;
 And when his gaudy banner is display'd,
 The coward fights, and will not be dismay'd.

"Then, childish fear, avaunt! debating, die!
 Respect^a and reason wait on wrinkled age!
 My heart shall never countermand mine eye:
 Sad^b pause and deep regard besem the sage;
 My part is youth, and beats these from the stage:
 Desire my pilot is, beauty my prize;
 Then who fears sinking where such treasure lies?"

As corn o'ergrown by weeds, so heedful fear
 Is almost chok'd by unresisted lust.
 Away he steals with open listening ear,
 Full of foul hope, and full of fond mistrust,
 Both which, as servitors to the unjust,
 So cross him with their opposite persuasion,
 That now he vows a league, and now invasion.

Within his thought her heavenly image sits,
 And in the selfsame seat sits Collatine:
 That eye which looks on her confounds his wits;
 That eye which him beholds, as more divine,
 Unto a view so false will not incline;

^a *Respect*—prudence,—in the sense of the original Latin, looking again.

^b *Sad*—grave.

But with a pure appeal seeks to the heart,
Which once corrupted takes the worser part;

And therein heartens up his servile powers,
Who, flatter'd by their leader's jocund show,
Stuff up his lust, as minutes fill up hours;
And as their captain, so their pride doth grow,
Paying more slavish tribute than they owe.
By reprobate desire thus madly led,
The Roman lord marcheth to Lucrece' bed.

The locks between her chamber and his will,
Each one by him enforc'd, retires his ward;
But as they open they all rate his ill,
Which drives the creeping thief to some regard;
The threshold gates the door to have him heard;
Night-wandering weasels shrink to see him there;
They fright him, yet he still pursues his fear.

As each unwilling portal yields him way,
Through little vents and crannies of the place
The wind wars with his torch, to make him stay,
And blows the smoke of it into his face,
Extinguishing his conduct^a in this case;
But his hot heart, which fond desire doth scorch,
Puffs forth another wind that fires the torch;

And being lighted, by the light he spies
Lucretia's glove, wherein her needle sticks;
He takes it from the rushes where it lies,
And gripping it, the needl^b his finger pricks:
As who should say, this glove to wanton tricks
Is not inur'd: return again in haste;
Thou seest our mistress' ornaments are chaste.

^a *Conduct*—conductor.
S. P. VOL.

^b *Needl*—needle.
G

The blackest sin is clear'd with absolution;
 Against love's fire fear's frost hath dissolution.
 The eye of heaven is out, and misty night
 Covers the shame that follows sweet delight."

This said, his guilty hand pluck'd up the latch,
 And with his knee the door he opens wide:
 The dove sleeps fast that this night-owl will catch;
 Thus treason works ere traitors be espied.
 Who sees the lurking serpent steps aside;
 But she, sound sleeping, fearing no such thing,
 Lies at the mercy of his mortal sting.

Into the chamber wickedly he stalks.^a
 And gazeth on her yet unstained bed.
 The curtains being close, about he walks,
 Rolling his greedy eyeballs in his head:
 By their high treason is his heart misled;
 Which gives the watchword to his hand full soon,
 To draw the cloud that hides the silver moon.

Look, as the fair and fiery-pointed sun,
 Rushing from forth a cloud, bereaves our sight;
 Even so, the curtain drawn, his eyes begun
 To wink, being blinded with a greater light:
 Whether it is that she reflects so bright,
 That dazzleth them, or else some shame supposed;
 But blind they are, and keep themselves enclosed.

O, had they in that darksome prison died,
 Then had they seen the period of their ill!
 Then Collatine again by Lucrece' side
 In his clear bed might have reposed still:
 But they must ops, this blessed league to kill;

^a *Stalks.* To stalk literally means to go warily or softly. It is the Anglo-Saxon *stalcan*—*pedetentim* *ut*. The fowler who creeps upon the birds stalks, and his *stalking* hawk derives its name from the character of the fowler's movement.

And holy-thoughted Lucrece to their sight
Must sell her joy, her life, her world's delight.

Her lily hand her rosy cheek lies under,
Cozening the pillow of a lawful kiss ;
Who therefore angry, seems to part in sunder,
Swelling on either side to want his bliss ;
Between whose hills her head entombed is :
Where, like a virtuous monument, she lies,
To be admir'd of lewd unhallow'd eyes.

Without the bed her other fair hand was,
On the green coverlet ; whose perfect white
Show'd like an April daisy on the grass,
With pearly sweat, resembling dew of night.
Her eyes, like marigolds, had sheath'd their light,
And canopied in darkness sweetly lay,
Till they might open to ~~an~~ the day.

Her hair, like golden threads, play'd with her breath ;
O modest wantons ! wanton modesty !
Showing life's triumph in the map of death,
And death's dim look in life's mortality :
Each in her sleep themselves so beautify,
As if between them twain there were no strife,
But that life liv'd in death, and death in life.

Her breasts, like ivory globes circled with blue,
A pair of maiden worlds unconquered,
Save of their lord no bearing yoke they knew,
And him by oath they truly honoured.
These worlds in Tarquin new ambition bred :
Who, like a foul usurper, went about
From this fair throne to heave the owner out.

What could he see but mightily he noted ?
What did he note but strongly he desir'd ?
What he beheld on that he firmly doted,

And in his will his wilful eye he tir'd.^a
 With more than admiration he admir'd
 Her azure veins, her alabaster skin,
 Her coral lips, her snow-white dimpled chin.

As the grim lion fawneth o'er his prey,
 Sharp hunger by the conquest satisfied,
 So o'er this sleeping soul doth Tarquin stay,
 His rage of lust by gazing qualified ;
 Slack'd, not suppress'd ; for standing by her side,
 His eye, which late this mutiny restrains,
 Unto a greater uproar tempts his veins :

And they, like straggling slaves for pillage fighting,
 Obdurate vassals, fell exploits effecting,
 In bloody death and ravishment delighting,
 Nor children's tears, nor mothers' groans respecting.
 Swell in their pride, the onset still expecting :
 Anon his beating heart, alarum striking,
 Gives the hot charge, and bids them do their liking.

His drumming heart cheers up his burning eye,
 His eye commends the leading to his hand ;
 His hand, as proud of such a dignity,
 Smoking with pride, march'd on to make his stand
 On her bare breast, the heart of all her land ;
 Whose ranks of blue veins, as his hand did scale,
 Left their round turrets destitute and pale.

They, mustering to the quiet cabinet
 Where their dear governess and lady lies,
 Do tell her she is dreadfully beset,
 And fright her with confusion of their cries :
 She, much amaz'd, breaks ope her lock'd-up eyes,
 Who, peeping forth this tumult to behold,
 Are by his flaming torch dimm'd and controll'd.

^a Tir'd satiated, glutt'd—as a falcon *tees* on his prey

Imagine her as one in dead of night
 From forth dull sleep by dreadful fancy waking,
 That thinks she hath beheld some ghastly sprite,
 Whose grim aspect sets every joint a shaking ;
 What terror 't is ! but she, in worsè taking,
 From sleep disturbed, heedfully doth view
 The sight which makes supposed terror true.

Wrapp'd and confounded in a thousand fears,
 Like to a new-kill'd bird she trembling lies :
 She dares not look ; yet, winking, there appears
 Quick-shifting antics, ugly in her eyes :
 Such shadows are the weak brain's forgeries :
 Who, angry that the eyes fly from their lights,
 In darkness daunts them with more dreadful sights.

His hand, that yet remains^a upon her breast,
 (Rude ram, to batter such an ivory wall !)
 May feel her heart, poor citizen, distress'd,
 Wounding itself to death, rise up and fall,
 Beating her bulk,^a that his hand shakes withal.
 This moves in him more rage, and lesser pity,
 To make the breach, and enter this sweet city.

First, like a trumpet, doth his tongue begin
 To sound a parley to his heartless foe,
 Who o'er the white sheet peers her winter chin,
 The reason of this rash alarm to know,
 Which he by dumb demeanour seeks to show ;
 But she with vehement prayers urgèth still
 Under what colour he commits this ill.

Thus he replies : " The colour in thy face
 That even for anger makes the lily pale,
 And the red rose blush at her own disgrace)

^a Bulk—the body the whole mass.

Shall plead for me, and tell my loving tale :
 Under that colour am I come to scale
 Thy never-conquer'd fort ; the fault is thine,
 For those thine eyes betray thee unto mine.

" Thus I forestall thee, if thou mean to chide :
 Thy beauty hath ensnarl'd thee to this night,
 Where thou with patience must my will abide,
 My will that marks thee for my earth's delight.
 Which I to conquer sought with all my might ;
 But as reproof and reason beat it dead.
 By thy blight beauty was it newly bred.

" I see what crosses my attempt will bring ;
 I know what thorns the growing rose defends ;
 I think the honey guarded with a sting :
 All this, beforehand, counsel comprehends :
 But will is deaf, and hears no heedful friends ;
 Only he hath an eye to gaze on beauty,
 And dotes on what he looks, 'gainst law or duty.

" I have debated, even in my soul,
 What wrong, what shame, what sorrow I shall breed ;
 But nothing can Affection's course control,
 Or stop the headlong fury of his speed.
 I know repentant tears ensue the deed,
 Reproach, disdain, and deadly enmity ;
 Yet strive I to embrace mine infamy."

This said, he shakes aloft his Roman blade,
 Which, like a falcon towering in the skies,
 Coucheth^a the fowl below with his wing's shade,
 Whose crooked beak threatens if he mount he dies :
 So under his insulting falchion lies
 Harmless Lucretia, marking what he tells
 With trembling fear, as fowl hear falcon's bells.

^a *Coucheth*—causes to couch.

"Lucrece," quoth he, "this night I must enjoy thee:
 If thou deny, then force must work my way,
 For in thy bed I purpose to destroy thee;
 That done, some worthless slave of thine I'll slay,
 To kill thine honour with thy life's decay;
 And in thy dead arms do I mean to place him,
 Swearing I slew him, seeing thee embrace him.

"So thy surviving husband shall remain
 The scornful mark of every open eye;
 Thy kinsmen hang their heads at this disdain,
 Thy issue blurr'd with nameless bastardy:
 And thou, the author of their obloquy,
 Shalt have thy trespass cited up in rhymes,
 And sung by children in succeeding times.

"But if thou yield I rest thy secret friend:
 The fault unknown is as a thought enacted;
 A little harm, done to a great good end,
 For lawful policy remains enacted.
 The poisonous simple sometimes is compacted
 In a pure compound; being so applied
 His venom in effect is purified.

"Then for thy husband and thy children's sake,
 Tender^a my suit: bequeath not to their lot
 The shame that from them no device can take,
 The blemish that will never be forgot;
 Worse than a slavish wipe, or birth-hour's blot:^b
 For marks descried in men's nativity
 Are nature's faults, not their own infamy."

Here with a cockatrice' dead-killing eye
 He rouseth up himself, and makes a pause;
 While she, the picture of pure piety,

^a *Tender*—heed, regard.

^b *Birth-hour's blot*—corporal blemish.

Like a white hind under the grype's^a sharp claws,
Pleads in a wilderness, where are no laws,
To the rough beast that knows no gentle right,
Nor aught obeys but his foul appetite :

But when a black-fac'd cloud the world doth threat,
In his dim mist the aspiring mountains hiding,
From earth's dark womb some gentle gust doth get,
Which blows these pitchy vapours from their biding,
Hindering their present fall by this dividing ;
So his unhallow'd haste her words delays,
And moody Pluto winks while Orpheus plays.

Yet, foul night-waking cat, he doth but dally,
While in his holdfast foot the weak mouse panteth ;
Her sad behaviour feeds his vulture folly,
A swallowing gulf that even in plenty wanteth :
His ear her prayers admits, but his heart granteth
No penetrable entrance to her plaining :
Tears harden lust, though marble wear with raining.

Her pity-pleading eyes are sadly fix'd
In the remorseless wrinkles of his face ;
Her modest eloquence with sighs is mix'd,
Which to her oratory adds more grace.
She puts the period often from his place,
And 'midst the sentence so her accent breaks,
That twice she doth begin ere once she speaks.

She conjures him by high almighty Jove,
By knighthood, gentry, and sweet friendship's oath,
By her untimely tears, her husband's love,
By holy human law, and common troth,
By heaven and earth, and all the power of both,

^a Steevens says the *grype* is properly the griffin. But in the passage before us, as in the early English writers, the word is applied to birds of prey,—the eagle especially.

That to his borrow'd bed he make retire,
And stoop to honour, not to foul desire.

Quoth she, "Reward not hospitality
With such black payment as thou hast pretended,*
Mud not the fountain that gave drink to thee;
Mar not the thing that cannot be amended;
End thy ill aim, before thy shoot be ended:
He is no woodman that doth bend his bow
To strike a poor unseasonable doe.

"My husband is thy friend, for his sake spare me;
Thyself art mighty, for thine own sake leave me;
Myself a weakling, do not then ensnare me;
Thou look'st not like deceit; do not deceive me:
My sighs, like whirlwinds, labour hence to heave
thee.

If ever man were mov'd, with woman's moans,
Be moved with my tears, my sighs, my groans:

"All which together, like a troubled ocean,
Beat at thy rocky and wreck-threatening heart;
To soften it with their continual motion;
For stones dissolv'd to water do convert
O, if no harder than a stone thou art,
Melt at my tears, and be compassionate!
Soft pity enters at an iron gate.

"In Tarquin's likeness I did entertain thee;
Hast thou put on his shape to do him shame?
To all the host of heaven I complain me,
Thou wrong'st his honour, wound'st his princely name.
Thou art not what thou seem'st; and if the same
Thou seem'st not what thou art, a god, a king;
For kings like gods should govern everything.

* *Pretended*—proposed.

"How will thy shame be seeded in thine age,
When thus thy vices bud before thy spring!
If in thy hope thou dar'st do such outrage,
What dar'st thou not when once thou art a king!
O be remember'd, no outrageous thing
From vassal actors can be wip'd away;
Then kings' misdeeds cannot be hid in clay.

"This deed will make thee only lov'd for fear,
But happy monarchs still are fear'd for love:
With foul offenders thou perforce must bear,
When they in thee the like offences prove:
If but for fear of this thy will remove;
For princes are the glass, the school, the book,
Where subjects' eyes do learn, do read, do look.

"And wilt thou be the school where Lust shall learn?
Must he in thee read lectures of such shame?
Wilt thou be glass, wherein it shall discern
Authority for sin, warrant for blame,
To privilege dishonour in thy name?
Thou back'st reproach against long-lived laud,
And mak'st fair reputation but a bawd.

"Hast thou command? by him that gave it thee,
From a pure heart command thy rebel will:
Draw not thy sword to guard iniquity,
For it was lent thee all that brood to kill.
Thy princely office how canst thou fulfil,
When, pattern'd by thy fault, foul Sin may say,
He learn'd to sin, and thou didst teach the way?

"Think but how vile a spectacle it were
To view thy present trespass in another.
Men's faults do seldom to themselves appear;
Their own transgressions partially they smother:
This guilt would seem death-worthy in thy brother.

O how are they wrapp'd in with infamies,
That from their own misdeeds askaunce their eyes!

"To thee, to thee, my heav'd-up hands appeal,
Not to seducing lust, thy rash relier;
I sue for exil'd majesty's repeal;^a
Let him return, and flattering thoughts retire:
His true respect will 'prison false desire,
And wipe the dim mist from thy doting eyne,
That thou shalt see thy state, and pity mine."

"Have done," quoth he; "my uncontrolled tide
Turns not, but swells the higher by this let.
Small lights are soon blown out, huge fires abide,
And with the wind in greater fury fret:
The petty streams that pay a daily debt
To their salt sovereign, with their flesh falls' haste,
Add to his flow, but alter not his taste."

"Thou art," quoth she, "a sea, a sovereign king;
And lo, there falls into thy boundless flood
Black lust, dishonour, shame, misgoverning,
Who seek to stain the ocean of thy blood.
If all these petty ills shall change thy good,
Thy sea within a puddle's womb is hers'd,
And not the puddle in thy sea dispers'd."

"So shall these slaves be king, and thou their slave;
Thou nobly base, they basely dignified;
Thou their fair life, and they thy fouler grave;
Thou loathed in their shame, they in thy pride:
The lesser thing should not the greater hide;
The cedar stoops not to the base shrub's foot,
But low shrubs wither at the cedar's root."

^a *Repeal*—recall; from the French *rappeler*

"So let thy thoughts, low vassals to thy state"—
"No more," quoth he, "by heaven, I will not hear thee :
Yield to my love ; if not, enforced hate,
Instead of love's coy touch, shall rudely tear thee ;
That done, despitefully I mean to bear thee
Unto the base bed of some rascal groom,
To be thy partner in this shameful doom."

This said, he sets his foot upon the light,
For light and lust are deadly enemies :
Shame folded up in blind concealing night,
When most unseen, then most doth tyrannize.
The wolf hath seiz'd his prey, the poor lamb cries
Till with her own white fleece her voice controll'd
Entombs her outcry in her lips' sweet fold :

For with the nightly linen that she wears
He pens her piteous clamours in her head ;
Cooling his hot face in the chastest tears
That ever modest eyes with sorrow shed.
O, that prone^a lust should stain so pure a bed !
The spots whereof could weeping purify,
Her tears should drop on them perpetually.

But she hath lost a dearer thing than life,
And he hath won what he would lose again.
This forced league doth force a further strife,
This momentary joy breeds months of pain,
This hot desire converts to cold disdain :
Pure Chastity is rifled of her store,
And Lust, the thief, far poorer than before.

Look, as the full-fed hound or gorged hawk,
Unapt for tender smell or speedy flight,
Make slow pursuit, or altogether balk

^a *Pronc*—having inclination or propensity, and so self-willed, headstrong.

The prey wherein by nature they delight ;
 So surfeit-taking Tarquin fares this night :
 His taste delicious, in digestion souring,
 Devours his will that liv'd by foul devouring.

O deeper sin than bottomless conceit
 Can comprehend in still imagination !
 Drunken desire must vomit his receipt,
 Ere he can see his own abomination.
 While lust is in his pride no exclamation
 Can curb his heat, or rein his rash desire,
 Till, like a jade, self-will himself doth tire.

And then with lank and lean discolour'd cheek,
 With heavy eye, knit brow, and strengthless pace,
 Feeble desire, all recreant, poor, and meek,
 Like to a bankrupt beggar wails his case :
 The flesh being proud, doth he doth fight with grace,
 For there it revels ; and when that decay's,
 The guilty rebel for remission prays.

So fares it with this faultful lord of Rome,
 Who this accomplishment so hotly chas'd ;
 For now against himself he sounds this doom,
 That through the length of times he stands disgrac'd :
 Besides, his soul's fair temple is defac'd ;
 To whose weak ruins muster troops of cares,
 To ask the spotted princess how she fares.

She says, her subjects with foul insurrection
 Have batter'd down her consecrated wall,
 And by their mortal fault brought in subjection
 Her immortality, and make her thrall
 To living death, and pain perpetual :
 Which in her prescience she controlled still,
 But her foresight could not forestall their will.

Even in this thought through the dark night he stealeth,
A captive victor that hath lost in gain;
Bearing away the wound that nothing healeth,
The scar that will, despite of cure, remain,
Leaving his spoil perplex'd in greater pain.
She bears the load of lust he left behind,
And he the burthen of a guilty mind.

He like a thievish dog creeps sadly thence;
She like a wearied lamb lies panting there;
He scowls, and hates himself for his offence;
She, desperate, with her nails her flesh doth tear;
He faintly flies, sweating with guilty fear;
She stays exclaiming on the diueful night;
He runs, and chides his vanish'd, loath'd delight.

He thence departs a heavy convertite;
She there remains a hopeless castaway;
He in his speed looks for the morning light;
She prays she never may behold the day;
"For day," quoth she, "night's scapes doth open lay;
And my true eyes have never practis'd how
To cloak offences with a cunning brow.

"They think not but that every eye can see
The same disgrace which they themselves behold;
And therefore would they still in darkness be,
To have their unseen sin remain untold;
For they their guilt with weeping will unfold,
And grave, like water, that doth eat in steel,
Upon my cheeks what helpless shame I feel."

Here she exclaims against repose and rest,
And bids her eyes hereafter still be blind.
She wakes her heart by beating on her breast,
And bids it leap from thence, where it may find
Some purer chest, to close so pure a mind.

Frantic with grief thus breathes she forth her spite
Against the unseen secrecy of night :

“ O comfort-killing night, image of hell !
Dim register and notary of shame !
Black stage for tragedies and murders fell !
Vast sin-concealing chaos ! nurse of blame !
Blind muffled bawd ! dark harbour for defame !
Grim cave of death, whispering conspirator,
With close-tongued treason and the ravisher !

“ O hateful, vaporous, and foggy night,
Since thou art guilty of my cureless crime,
Muster thy mists to meet the eastern light,
Make war against proportion'd course of time !
Or if thou wilt permit the sun to climb
His wonted height, yet ere he go to bed,
Knit poisonous clouds about his golden head.

“ With rotten damps ravish the morning air ;
Let their exhal'd unwholesome breaths make sick
The life of purity, the supreme fair,
Ere he arrive his weary noontide prick :^a
And let thy misty vapours march so thick,
That in their smoky ranks his smother'd light
May set at noon, and make perpetual night.

“ Were Tarquin night, (as he is but night's child,)
The silver-shining queen he would distain ;
Her twinkling handmaids too, by him defil'd,
Through night's black bosom should not peep again
So should I have copartners in my pain :
And fellowship in woe doth woe assuage,
As palmers' chat makes short their pilgrimage.

^a *Noontide prick*—the point of noon.

"Where^a now I have no one to blush with me,
 To cross their arms, and hang their heads with mine,
 To mask their brows, and hide their infamy;
 But I alone alone must sit and pine,
 Seasoning the earth with showers of silver brine,
 Mingling my talk with tears, my grief with groans,
 Poor wasting monuments of lasting moans.

"O night, thou furnace of foul-reeking smoke,
 Let not the jealous day behold that face
 Which underneath thy black all-hiding cloak
 Immodestly lies martyr'd with disgrace!
 Keep still possession of thy gloomy place,
 That all the faults which in thy reign are made
 May likewise be sepulchred^b in thy shade!

"Make me not object to the tell-tale day!
 The light will show, character'd^c in my brow,
 The story of sweet chastity's decay,
 The impious breach of holy wedlock vow:
 Yea, the illiterate, that know not how
 To cipher what is writ in learned books,
 Will quote^d my loathsome trespass in my looks.

"The nurse, to still her child, will tell my story,
 And fright her crying babe with Tarquin's name;
 The orator, to deck his oratory,
 Will couple my reproach to Tarquin's shame:
 Feast-finding minstrels, tuning my defame,

^a *Where*—whereas.

^b *Sepulchred*. Milton uses the word with the same accent, in his lines on Shakspeare:—

"And so sepulchred in such pomp does lie,
 That kings for such a tomb would wish to die."

^c *Character'd*. Here again is an accentuation different from the present, but which is common to all Shakspeare's contemporaries.

^d *Quote*—observe.

Will tie the hearers to attend each line,
How Tarquin wronged me, I Collatine.

" Let my good name, that senseless reputation,
For Collatine's dear love be kept unspotted :
If that be made a theme for disputation,
The branches of another root are rotted,
And undeserv'd reproach to him allotted,
That is as clear from this attaint of mine,
As I, ere this, was pure to Collatine.

" O unseen shame ! invisible disgrace !
O unfelt sore ! crest-wounding, private scar !
Reproach is stamp'd in Collatinus' face,
And Tarquin's eye may read the mot ^a afar,
How he in peace is wounded, not in war.
Alas, how many bear such shameful blows,
Which not themselves but he that gives them knows !
^a

" If, Collatine, thine honour lay in me,
From me by strong assault it is bereft.
My honey lost, and I, a drone-like bee,
Have no perfection of my summer left,
But robb'd and ransack'd by injurious theft :
In thy weak hive a wandering wasp hath crept,
And suck'd the honey which thy chaste bee kept.

" Yet am I guilty of thy honour's wrack,—
Yet for thy honour did I entertain him ;
Coming from thee, I could not put him back,
For it had been dishonour to disdain him :
Besides of weariness he did complain him,
And talk'd of virtue ;—O, unlook'd for evil,
When virtue is plotan'd in such a devil !

^a *Mot* — motto.

"Why should the worm intrude the maiden bud?
 Or hateful cuckoos hatch in sparrows' nests?
 Or toads infect fair founts with venom mud?
 Or tyrant folly lurk in gentle breasts?^a
 O! kings be breakers of their own behests?
 But no perfection is so absolute,
 That some impurity doth not pollute.

"The aged man that coffers up his gold
 Is plagued with cramps, and gout, and painful fits,
 And scarce hath eyes his treasure to behold,
 But like still-pining Tantalus he sits,
 And useless barns the harvest of his wits;
 Having no other pleasure of his gain
 But torment that it cannot cure his pain.

"So then he hath it, when he cannot use it,
 And leaves it to be master'd by his young,
 Who in their pride do presently abuse it:
 Their father was too weak, and they too strong,
 To hold their cursed-blessed fortune long.
 The sweets we wish for turn to loathed sour,
 Even in the moment that we call them ours.

"Unruly blasts wait on the tender spring;
 Unwholesome weeds take root with precious flowers;
 The adder hisses where the sweet birds sing:
 What virtue breeds iniquity devours:
 We have no good that we can say is ours.
 But ill-annexed Opportunity
 Or kills his life, or else his quality.

"O Opportunity! thy guilt is great:
 'T is thou that execut'st the traitor's treason;
 Thou sett'st the wolf where he the lamb may get;

^a *Folly* is here used in the sense of wickedness; and *gentle* in that of well-born.

Whoever plots the sin, thou point'st the season ;
 'T is thou that spurn'st at right, at law, at reason ;
 And in thy shady cell, where none may spy him,
 Sits Sin, to seize the souls that wander by him.

" Thou mak'st the vestal violate her oath ;
 Thou blow'st the fire when temperance is thaw'd ;
 Thou smother'st honesty, thou murder'st troth ;
 Thou foul abetter ! thou notorious bawd ;
 Thou plantest scandal, and displacest laud :
 Thou ravisher, thou traitor, thou false thief,
 Thy honey turns to gall, thy joy to grief !

" Thy secret pleasure turns to open shame,
 Thy private feasting to a public fast ;
 Thy smoothing^a titles to a ragged^b name ;
 Thy sugar'd tongue to bitter wormwood taste :
 Thy violent vanities can never last.
 How comes it then, vile Opportunity,
 Being so bad, such numbers seek for thee ?

" When wilt thou be the humble suppliant's friend,
 And bring him where his suit may be obtain'd ?
 When wilt thou sort^c an hour great strifes to end ?
 Or free that soul which wretchedness hath chain'd ?
 Give physic to the sick, ease to the pain'd ?
 The poor, lame, blind, halt, creep, cry out for thee,
 But they ne'er meet with Opportunity.

" The patient dies while the physician sleeps ;
 The orphan pines while the oppressor feeds,
 Justice is feasting while the widow weeps ;
 Advice is sporting while infection breeds :^d
 Thou grant'st no time for charitable deeds :

^a *Smoothing*—flattering.

^b *Ragged* is here used in the sense of contemptible.

^c *Sort*—assign, appropriate.

^d *Advice* is here used in the sense of government, municipal.

Wrath, envy, treason, rape, and murder's rages,
Thy heinous hours wait on them as their pages.

"When truth and virtue have to do with thee
A thousand crosses keep them from thy aid;
They buy thy help: but Sin ne'er gives a fee,
He gratis comes; and thou art well appay'd"
As well to hear as grant what he hath said.
My Collatine would else have come to me
When Tarquin did, but he was stay'd by thee.

"Guilty thou art of murder and of theft;
Guilty of perjury and subornation;
Guilty of treason, forgery, and shift;
Guilty of incest, that abomination:
An accessory by thine inclination
To all sins past, and all that are to come,
From the creation to the general doom.

"Mis-shapen Time, copesmate of ugly night,
Swift subtle post, carrier of grisly care,
Eater of youth, false slave to false delight,
Base watch of woes, sin's pack-horse, virtue's snare,
Thou nursest all, and murderest all that are.
O hear me then, injurious, shifting Time!
Be guilty of my death, since of my crime.

"Why hath thy servant, Opportunity,
Betray'd the hours thou gav'st me to repose?
Cancell'd my fortunes, and enchain'd me
To endless date of never-ending woes?
Time's office is to fine^b the hate of foes;

or civil; and the line too correctly describes the carelessness of those in high places, who abated not their feasting and their revelry while pestilence was doing its terrible work around them.

^a *Appay'd*—satisfied, pleased.

^b *To fine*—to bring to an end.

To eat up errors by opinion bred,
Not spend the dowry of a lawful bed.

“ Time’s glory is to calm contending kings,
To unmask falsehood, and bring truth to light,
To stamp the seal of time in aged things,
To wake the morn, and sentinel the night,
To wrong the wronger till he render right;
To ruinate proud buildings with thy hours,
And smear with dust their glittering golden towers :

“ To fill with worm-holes stately monuments,
To feed oblivion with decay of things,
To blot old books, and alter their contents,
To pluck the quills from ancient ravens’ wings,
To dry the old oak’s sap, and cherish springs ;^a
To spoil antiquities of hammer’d steel,
And turn the giddy round of Fortune’s wheel ;

“ To show the beldame daughters of her daughter,
To make the child a man, the man a child.
To slay the tiger that doth live by slaughter,
To tame the unicorn and lion wild,
To mock the subtle, in themselves beguil’d ;
To cheer the ploughman with increaseful crops,
And waste huge stones with little water-drops.

“ Why work’st thou mischief in thy pilgrimage,
Unless thou couldst return to make amends ?
One poor refining^b nanute in an age
Would purchase thee a thousand thousand friends,
Lending him wit that to bad debtors lends :
O, this dread night, wouldst thou one hour come back,
I could prevent this storm, and shun thy wrack !

^a Springs—shoots—saplings

^b Refining is here used in the sense of coming back again.

"Thou ceaseless lackey to eternity,
 With some mischance cross Tarquin in his flight :
 Devise extremes beyond extremity,
 To make him curse this cursed crimeful night :
 Let ghastly shadows his lewd eyes affright ;
 And the dire thought of his committed evil
 Shape every bush a hideous shapeless devil.

"Disturb his hours of rest with restless trances,
 Afflict him in his bed with bedrid groans ;
 Let there bechance him pitiful mischances,
 To make him moan, but pity not his moans :
 Stone him with harden'd hearts, harder than stones ;
 And let mild women to him lose their mildness,
 Wilder to him than tigers in their wildness.

"Let him have time to tear his curled hair,
 Let him have time against himself to rave,
 Let him have time of Time's help to despair,
 Let him have time to live a loathed slave,
 Let him have time a beggar's orts to crave ;
 And time to see one that by alms doth live
 Disdain to him disdained scraps to give.

"Let him have time to see his friends his foes,
 And merry fools to mock at him resort ;
 Let him have time to mark how slow time goes
 In time of sorrow, and how swift and short
 His time of folly and his time of sport :
 And ever let his unrecalling^a crime
 Have time to wail the abusing of his time.

"O Time, thou tutor both to good and bad.
 Teach me to curse him that thou taught'st this ill !
 At his own shadow let the thief run mad !

^a *Unrecalling*—not to be recalled.

Himself himself seek every hour to kill !
 Such wretched hands such wretched blood should
 spill

For who so base would such an office have
 As slanderous death a-man to so base a slave ?

" The baser is he, coming from a king,
 To shame his hope with deeds degenerate
 The mightier man, the mightier is the thing
 That makes him honour'd, or begets him hate,
 For greatest scandal waits on greatest state
 The moon being clouded presently is miss'd,
 But little stars may hide them when they list

" The crow may bathe his coal-black wings in mure,
 And unperceiv'd fly with the filth away,
 But if the like the snow-white swan desire,
 The stum upon his silver down will stay
 Poor gnomes are sightless night, kings glorious day
 Gnats are unnoted wheresoe'er they fly,
 But eagles gaz'd upon with every eye

' Out, idle words, servants to shallow fools !
 Unprofitable sounds, weak arbitiators !
 Busy yourselves in skill contending schools,
 Debate where leisure serves with dull debaters,
 To trembling clients be you mediators
 For me I force^a not argument a straw,
 Since that my case is past the help of law

" In vain I rail at Opportunity,
 At time, at Tarquin and uncheerful night,
 In vain I cavil with my infamy,
 In vain I spurn at my confirm'd despite
 This helpless smoke of words doth me no right

^a *Force* is here used in the sense of value or regard

The remedy indeed to do me good,
Is to let forth my foul, defiled blood.

"Poor hand, why quiver'st thou at this decree?
Honour thyself to rid me of this shame;
For if I die my honour lives in thee,
But if I live thou liv'st in my defame:
Since thou couldst not defend thy loyal dame,
And wast afraid to scratch her wicked foe,
Kill both thyself and her for yielding so."

This said, from her betumbled couch she starteth,
To find some desperate instrument of death:
But this no-slaughter-house no tool imparteth,
To make more vent for passage of her breath.
Which thronging through her lips so vanisheth
As smoke from *Ætna*, that in air consumes,
Or that which from discharged cannon fumes.

"In vain," quoth she, "I live and seek in vain
Some happy mean to end a hapless life.
I fear'd by Tarquin's falchion to be slain,
Yet for the selfsame purpose seek a knife:
But when I fear'd I was a loyal wife;
So am I now:—O no, that cannot be;
Of that true type hath Tarquin rifled me.

"O! that is gone for which I sought to live,
And therefore now I need not fear to die.
To clear this spot by death, at least I give
A badge of fame to slander's livery;
A dying life to living infamy;
Poor helpless help, the treasure stolen away,
To burn the guiltless casket where it lay!"

* An allusion to the badges which servants or retainers of families of rank wore on their liveries.

"Well, well, dear Collatine, thou shalt not know
 The stained taste of violated troth;
 I will not wrong thy true affection so
 To flatter thee with an infringed oath;
 This bastard graff shall never come to growth:
 He shall not boast who did thy stock pollute
 That thou art doting father of his fruit.

"Nor shall he smile at thee in secret thought,
 Nor laugh with his companions at thy state;
 But thou shalt know thy interest was not bought
 Basely with gold, but stolen from forth thy gate.
 For me, I am the mistress of my fate,
 And with my trespass never will dispense,
 Till life to death acquit my forc'd offence.

"I will not poison thee with my attaint,
 Nor sold my fault in cleanly-coin'd excuses;
 My sable ground of sin I will not paint,
 To hide the truth of this false night's abuses:
 My tongue shall utter all: mine eyes like sluices,
 As from a mountain-spring that feeds a dale,
 Shall gush pure streams to purge my impure tale."

By this, lamenting Philomel had ended
 The well-tun'd warble of her nightly sorrow,
 And solemn night with slow-sad gait descended
 To ugly hell; when lo, the blushing morrow
 Lends light to all fair eyes that light will borrow;
 But cloudy Lucrece shames herself to see,
 And therefore still in night would cloister'd be.

Revealing day through every cranny spies,
 And seems to point her out where she sits weeping;
 To whom she sobbing speaks: "O eye of eyes,
 Why priest thou through my window? leave thy peeping;
 Mock with thy tickling beams eyes that are sleeping:

Brand not my forehead with thy piercing light,
For day hath nought to do what 's done by night."

Thus cavils she with everything she sees :
True grief is fond " and testy as a child,
Who wayward once, his mood with nought agrees.
Old woes, not infant sorrows, bear them mild ;
Continuance tames the one ; the other wild,
Like an unpractis'd swimmer plunging still
With too much labour drowns for want of skill.

So she, deep-drenched in a sea of care,
Holds disputation with each thing she views,
And to herself all sorrow doth compare ;
No object but her passion's strength renews ;
And as one shifts, another straight ensues :
Sometime her grief is dumb, and hath no words ;
Sometime 't is mad, and too much talk affords.

The little birds that tune their morning's joy
Make her moans mad with their sweet melody.
For mirth doth search the bottom of annoy ;
Sad souls are slain in merry company ;
Grief best is pleas'd with grief's society :
True sorrow then is feelingly suffic'd
When with like semblance it is sympathis'd.

'T is double death to drown in ken of shore ;
He ten times pines that pines beholding food ;
To see the salve doth make the wound ache more ;
Great grief grieves most at that would do it good :
Deep woes roll forward like a gentle flood,
Who, being stopp'd, the bounding banks o'erflows :
Grief dallied with nor law nor limit knows.

" Fond—foolish.

"You mocking birds," quoth she, "your tunes en-
tomb

Within your hollow-swelling feather'd breasts,
And in my hearing be you mute and dumb!
(My restless discord loves no stops nor rests;
A woeful hostess brooks not merry guests :)
Relish your nimble notes to pleasing ears;
Distress likes dumps^a when time is kept with tears.

"Come, Philomel, that sing'st of ravishment,
Make thy sad grove in my dishevell'd hair.
As the dank earth weeps at thy languishment,
So I at each sad strain will strain a tear,
And with deep groans the diapason bear:
For burthen-wise I'll hum on Tarquin still,
While thou on Tereus descant'st better skill.^b

"And whiles against a ~~sharp~~ thou bear'st thy part,
To keep thy sharp woes waking, wretched I,
To imitate thee well, against my heart
Will fix a sharp knife, to affright mine eye;
Who, if it wink, shall thereon fall and die.
These means, as frets upon an instrument,
Shall tune our heartstrings to true languishment.

"And for, poor bird, thou sing'st not in the day,
As shaming any eye should thee behold,
Some dark deep desert, seated from the way,
That knows nor parching heat nor freezing cold,
We will find out; and there we will unfold
To creatures stern sad tunes, to change their kinds:
Since men prove beasts let beasts bear gentle
minds."

^a *Dumps*—melancholy airs.

^b *Better skill*. We must probabl here unlerstand *with* better skill.

As the poor frightened deer, that stands at gaze,
Wildly determining which way to fly,
Or one encompass'd with a winding maze,
That cannot tread the way out readily ;
So with herself is she in mutiny,
To live or die which of the twain were better,
When life is sham'd, and Death reproach's debtor.

" To kill myself," quoth she, " alack ! what were it,
But with my body my poor soul's pollution ?
They that lose half with greater patience bear it
Than they whose whole is swallow'd in confusion.
That mother tries a merciless conclusion
Who, having two sweet babes, when death takes one,
Will slay the other, and be nurse to none.

" My body or my soul. which was the dearer ?
When the one pure, the other made divine.
Whose love of either to myself was nearer ?
When both were kept for heaven and Collatine.
Ah me ! the bark peel'd from the lofty pine,
His leaves will wither, and his sap decay ;
So must my soul, her bark being peel'd away.

" Her house is sack'd, her quiet interrupted,
Her mansion batter'd by the enemy ;
Her sacred temple spotted, spoil'd, corrupted,
Grossly engirt with daring infamy :
Then let it not be call'd impiety
If in this blemish'd fort I make some hole
Through which I may convey this troubled soul.

" Yet die I will not till my Collatine
Have heard the cause of my untimely death ;
That he may vow, in that sad hour of mine,
Revenge on him that made me stop my breath.
My stained blood to Tarquin I 'll bequeath,

Which by him tainted shall for him be spent,
And as his due writ in my testament.

" My honour I 'll bequeath unto the knife
That wounds my body so dishonoured.
'T is honour to deprive dishonour'd life ;
The one will live, the other being dead :
So of shame's ashes shall my fame be bred ;
For in my death I murder shameful scorn :
My shame so dead, mine honour is new-born.

" Dear lord of that dear jewel I have lost,
What legacy shall I bequeath to thee ?
My resolution, Love, shall be thy boast,
By whose example thou reveng'd mayst be.
How Tarquin must be used, read it in me :
Myself, thy friend, will kill myself, thy foe,
And, for my sake, serve thou false Tarquin so

" This brief abridgment of my will I make :
My soul and body to the skies and ground ;
My resolution, husband, do thou take ;
Mine honour be the knife's that makes my wound ;
My shame be his that did my fame confound ;
And all my fame that lives disbursed be
To those that live, and think no shame of me.

" Thou, Collatine, shalt oversee this will ; *
How was I overseen that thou shalt see it !
My blood shall wash the slander of mine ill ;
My life's foul deed my life's fair end shall free it.
Faint not faint heart, but stoutly say, ' so be it.'
Yield to my hand ; my hand shall conquer thee ;
Thou dead, both die, and both shall victors be."

* The executor of a will was sometimes called the *overseer* ; but our ancestors often appointed overseers as well as executors.

This plot of death when sadly she had laid,
 And wip'd the brinish pearl from her bright eyes,
 With untun'd tongue she hoarsely call'd her maid,
 Whose swift obedience to her mistress lies ;
 For fleet-wing'd duty with thought's feathers flies.

Poor Lucrece' cheeks unto her maid seem so
 As winter meads when sun doth melt their snow.

Her mistress she doth give demure good-morrow,
 With soft-slow tongue, true mark of modesty,
 And sorts a sad look to her lady's sorrow,
 (For why ? her face wore sorrow's livery,)
 But durst not ask of her audaciously

Why her two suns were cloud-eclipsed so,
 Nor why her fair cheeks over-wash'd with woe.

But as the earth doth weep, the sun being set,
 Each flower moisten'd like a melting eye ;
 Even so the maid with swelling drops 'gan wet
 Her circled eyne, enforc'd by sympathy
 Of those fair suns, set in her mistress' sky,
 Who in a salt-wav'd ocean quench their light,
 Which makes the maid weep like the dewy night.

A pretty while these pretty creatures stand,
 Like ivory conduits coral cisterns filling :
 One justly weeps ; the other takes in hand
 No cause, but company, of her drops spilling :
 Their gentle sex to weep are often willing ;
 Grieving themselves to guess at others' smart,
 And then they drown their eyes, or break their hearts.

For men have marble, women waxen minds.
 And therefore are they form'd as marble will ;^a
 The weak oppress'd, the impression of strange lin's

^a *Marble* here stands for men, whose mind have just been compared to marble.

Is form'd in them by force, by fraud, or skill :
 Then call them not the authors of their ill,
 No more than wax shall be accounted evil,
 Wherein is stamp'd the semblance of a devil.

Their smoothness, like a goodly champaign plain,
 Lays open all the little worms that creep;
 In men, as in a rough-grown grove, remain
 Cave-keeping evils that obscurely sleep :
 Through crystal walls each little mote wil' peep :
 Though men can cover crimes with bold stern looks,
 Poor women's faces are their own faults' books.

No man inveigh against the wither'd flower,
 But chide rough winter that the flower hath kill'd !
 Not that devour'd, but that which doth devour
 Is worthy blame. O, let it not be hild^a
 Poor women's faults that they are so fulfill'd^b
 With men's abuses ! those proud lords, to blame,
 Make weak-made women tenants to their shame.

The precedent whereof in Lucrece view,
 Assail'd by night with circumstances strong
 Of present death, and shame that might ensue
 By that her death, to do her husband wrong :
 Such danger to resistance did belong,
 That dying fear through all her body spread ;
 And who cannot abuse a body dead ?

By this, mild patience bid fair Lucrece speak
 To the poor counterfeit^c of her complaining :
 " My girl," quoth she, " on what occasion break
 Those tears from thee, that down thy cheeks are raining ?
 If thou dost weep for grief of my sustaining,

^a *Hild*—held. Such a change for the sake of rhyme is frequent in Spenser.

^b *Fulfill'd*—completely filled.

^c *Counterfeit*—a likeness or copy.

Know, gentle wench, it small avails my mood
If tears could help mine own would do me good

"But tell me, girl, when went —(and there she stay'd
Till after a deep groan) 'Tarquin from hence?'

"Madam, ere I was up, replied the maid,
'The more to blame my sluggard negligence
Yet with the fault I thus far can dispense,
Myself was stuning ere the break of day,
And, ere I rose, was Tarquin gone away

"But, lady, if your maid may be so bold,
She would request to know your heaviness
'O peace!' quoth Lucrece, "if it should be told,
The repetition cannot make it less
For more it is than I can well express
And that deep torture may be call'd a hell,
When more is felt than one hath power to tell

"Go, get me hither paper, ink and pen—
Yet save that labour for I have them here
What should I say?—One of my husband's men
Bid thou be ready, by and by, to bear
A letter to my lord, my love, my dear,
Bid him with speed prepare to carry it
The cause craves haste, and it will soon be writ."

Her maid is gone, and she prepares to write,
First hovering o'er the paper with her quill
Conceit and grief an eager combat fight,
What wit sets down is blotted straight with will,
This is too curious-good, this blunt and ill
Much like a press of people at a door,
Throng her inventions, which shall be before

At last she thus begins —"Thou worthy lord
Of that unworthy wife that greeteth thee,
Health to thy person! next vouchsafe to afford

(If ever, love, thy Lucrece thou wilt see)
 Some present speed to come and visit me :
 So I commend me from our house in grief ;
 My woes are tedious, though my words are brief."

Here folds she up the tenor of her woe,
 Her certain sorrow writ uncertainly.
 By this short schedule Collatine may know
 Her grief, but not her grief's true quality ;
 She dares not thereof make discovery,
 Lest he should hold it her own gross abuse,
 Ere she with blood had stain'd her stain'd excuse.

Besides, the life and feeling of her passion
 She hoards, to spend when he is by to hear her ;
 When sighs, and groans, and tears may grace the fashion
 Of her disgrace, the better so to clear her
 From that suspicion which the world might bear her.
 To shun this blot, she would not blot the letter
 With words, till action might become them better.

To see sad sights moves more than hear them told ,
 For then the eye interprets to the ear
 The heavy motion that it doth behold,*
 When every part a part of woe doth bear.
 'Tis but a part of sorrow that we hear .
 Deep sounds make lesser noise than shallow words,
 And sorrow ebbs, being blown with wind of words.

Her letter now is seal'd, and on it writ,
 " At Ardea to my lord with more than haste "
 The post attends, and she delivers it,
 Charging the sour faced groom to hie as fast
 As lagging fowls before the northern blast.
 Speed more than speed but dull and slow she deems
 Extremity still urgeth such extremes

* Motion—dumb show

The homely villain court'sies to her low ;
And blushing on her, with a steadfast eye
Receives the scroll, without or yea or no,
And forth with bashful innocence doth hie.
But they whose guilt within their bosoms lie
Imagine every eye beholds their blame ;
For Lucrece thought he blush'd to see her shame ;

When, silly groom ! God wot, it was defect
Of spirit, life, and bold audacity.
Such harmless creatures have a true respect
To talk in deeds, while others saucily
Promise more speed, but do it leisurely :
Even so, this pattern of the worn-out age
Pawn'd honest looks, but laid no words to gage.

His kindled duty kindled her mistrust,
That two red fires in both their faces blaz'd ;
She thought he blush'd, as knowing Tarquin's lust,
And, blushing with him, wistly on him gaz'd ;
Her earnest eye did make him more amaz'd :
The more she saw the blood his cheeks replenish,
The more she thought he spied in her some blemish.

But long she thinks till he return again,
And yet the duteous vassal scarce is gone.
The weary time she cannot entertain,
For now 't is stale to sigh, to weep, and groan :
So woe hath wearied woe, moan tired moan,
That she her plaints a little while doth stay,
Pausing for means to mourn some newer way

At last she calls to mind where hangs a piece
Of skilful painting, made for Priam's Troy ;
Before the which is drawn* the power of Greece,

* *Drawn*—drawn out into the field.

For Helen's rape the city to destroy,
Threatning cloud-kissing Ilion with annoy,
Which the concerted^a painter drew so proud,
As heaven (it seem'd) to kiss the turrets bow'd

A thousand lamentable objects there,
In scorn of Nature, Art gave lifeless life
Many a dry drop seem'd a weeping tear,
Shed for the slaughter'd husband by the wife
The red blood reek'd to show the painter's strife,
And dying eyes gleam'd forth their ashy lights
Like dying coals burnt out in tedious nights

There might you see the labouring pioneer
Begrin'd with sweat, and smeared all with dust,
And from the towers of Troy there would appear
The very eyes of men through loopholes thrust,
Gazing upon the Greeks with little lust
Such sweet observance in this work was had,
That one might see those far-off eyes look sad

In great commanders grace and majesty
You might behold, triumphing in their faces,
In youth, quick bearing and dexterity,
And here and there the painter interlaces
Pale cowards, marching on with trembling paces,
Which heartless peasants did so well resemble,
That one would swear he saw them quake and
tremble.

In Ajax and Ulysses, O what art
Of physiognomy might one behold!
The face of either 'cipher'd either's heart,
Their face their manners most expressly told.
In Ajax' eyes blunt rage and rigour roll'd,

^a *Concerted*—ingenious, imaginative.

But the mild glance that sly Ulysses lent
Show'd deep regard and smiling government.

There pleading might you see grave Nestor stand,
As 't were encouraging the Greeks to fight ;
Making such sober action with his hand
That it beguil'd attention, charm'd the sight :
In speech, it seem'd, his beard all silver white
Wagg'd up and down, and from his lips did fly
Thin winding breath, which purl'd up to the sky.

About him were a press of gaping faces,
Which seem'd to swallow up his sound advice ;
All jointly listening, but with several graces,
As if some mermaid did their ears entice ;
Some high, some low, the painter was so nice :
The scalps of many, almost hid behind,
To jump up higher seem'd to mock the mind.

Here one man's hand lean'd on another's head,
His nose being shadow'd by his neighbour's ear ;
Here one being throng'd bears back, all boll'n^a and red ;
Another smother'd seems to pelt^b and swear ;
And in their rage such signs of rage they bear,
As, but for loss of Nestor's golden words,
It seem'd they would debate with angry swords.

For much imaginary work was there ;
Conceit deceitful, so compact, so kind,^c
That for Achilles' image stood his spear,
Grip'd in an armed hand ; himself, behind,
Was left unseen, save to the eye of mind :
A hand, a foot, a face, a leg, a head,
Stood for the whole to be imagined.

^a *Boll'n*—swollen

^b *Pelt*—to be clamorous, to discharge hasty words as pellets.

^c *Kind*—natural.

And from the walls of strong-besieged Troy,
 When their brave hope, bold Hector, march'd to field,
 Stood many Trojan mothers, sharing joy
 To see their youthful sons bright weapons wield,
 And to their hope they such odd action yield,
 That through their light joy seemed to appear
 (Like bright things stain'd) a kind of heavy fear

And, from the strond of Dardan where they fought,
 To Simois' reedy banks, the red blood ran,
 Whose waves to imitate the battle sought
 With swelling ridges, and their ranks began
 To break upon the galled shore, and than^a
 Retire again, till meeting greater ranks
 They join, and shoot their foam at Simois banks

To this well-painted piece is Lucrece come,
 To find a face where all distress is stel'd^b
 Many she sees where cares have carved some,
 But none where all distress and colour dwell'd,
 Till she despairing Hecuba beheld,
 Staring on Priam's wounds with her old eyes,
 Which bleeding under Pyrrhus proud foot lies

In her the painter had anatomiz'd
 Time's ruin, beauty's wrack, and grim care's reign,
 Her cheeks with chaps and wrinkles were disguis'd,
 Of what she was no semblance did remain
 Her blue blood chang'd to black, in every vein,

^a *Than* used for *then*

^b *Stel'd* A passage in the twenty fourth Sonnet may explain the lines in the text —

' Mine eye hath play'd the painter, and hath stel'd
 Thy beauty's form in table of my heart

It appears to us that the word is connected in Shakspeare's mind with the word *style*, the pencil by which forms are traced and copied.

Wanting the spring that those shrunk pipes had fed,
Show'd life imprison'd in a body dead.

On this sad shadow Lucrece spends her eyes,
And shapes her sorrow to the beldame's woes,
Who nothing wants to answer her but cries,
And bitter words to ban her cruel foes :
The painter was no God to lend her those ;
And therefore Lucrece swears he did her wrong,
To give her so much grief, and not a tongue.

" Poor instrument," quoth she, " without a sound,
I'll tune thy woes with my lamenting tongue :
And drop sweet balm in Priam's painted wound,
And rail on Pyrrhus that hath done him wrong,
And with my tears quench Troy that burns so long ;
And with my knife scratch out the angry eyes
Of all the Greeks that are thine enemies.

" Show me the strumpet that began this stir,
That with my nails her beauty I may tear.
Thy heat of lust, fond Paris, did incur
This load of wrath that burning Troy doth bear ;
Thy eye kindled the fire that burneth here :
And here in Troy, for trespass of thine eye,
The sire, the son, the dame, and daughter, die.

" Why should the private pleasure of some one
Become the public plague of many mo :^a
Let sin, alone committed, light alone
Upon his head that hath transgressed so.
Let guiltless souls be freed from guilty woe :
For one's offence why should so many fall,
To plague a private sin in general ?

^a *Mo*—more.

"Lo, here weeps Hecuba, here Priam dies,
 Here manly Hector faints, here Troilus swoonds,^a
 Here friend by friend in bloody channel lies,
 And friend to friend gives unadvised^b wounds,
 And one man's lust these many lives confounds.^c
 Had doting Priam check'd his son's desire,
 Troy had been bright with fame, and not with fire."

Here feelingly she weeps Troy's painted woes :
 For sorrow, like a heavy-hanging bell,
 Once set on ringing, with his own weight goes,
 Then little strength rings out the doleful knell
 So Lucrece set a work sad tales doth tell
 To pencill'd pensiveness and colour'd sorrow,
 She lends them words, and she their looks doth
 borrow

She throws her eyes about the painting, round,
 And whom she finds forlorn she doth lament
 At last she sees a wretched image bound,
 That piteous looks to Phrygian shepherds lent,
 His face, though full of cares, yet show'd content
 Onward to Troy with the blunt swains he goes,
 So mild that Patience seem'd to scorn his woes.

In him the painter labour'd with his skill
 To hide decent, and give the harmless show
 An humble gait, calm looks, eyes wailing still,
 A brow unbent, that seem'd to welcome woe,
 Cheeks neither red nor pale, but mingled so
 That blushing red no guilty instance gave,
 Nor ashy pale the fear that false hearts have

^a *Swoonds*—*swoons* It is probable that the word was so usually pronounced. In Drayton *swoond* rhymes to wound.

^b *Unadvised*—unknowing

^c *Confounds* is here used in the sense of destroys

But, like a constant and confirmed devil,
He entertain'd a show so seeming just,
And therein so ensconc'd his secret evil,
That jealousy itself could not mistrust
False-creeping craft and perjury should thrust
Into so bright a day such black-fac'd storms,
Or blot with hell-born sin such saint-like forms.

The well-skill'd workman this mild image drew
For perjur'd Sinon, whose enchanting story
The credulous old Priam after slew ;
Whose words, like wild-fire, burnt the shining glory
Of rich-built Ilion, that the skies were sorry,
And little stars shot from their fixed places,
When their glass fell wherein they view'd their faces.

This picture she advisedly * perus'd,
And chid the painter for his wondrous skill ;
Saying, some shape in Sinon's was abus'd,
So fair a form lodg'd not a mind so ill ;
And still on him she gaz'd, and gazing still,
Such signs of truth in his plain face she spied,
That she concludes the picture was belied.

" It cannot be," quoth she, " that so much guile"—
(She would have said) " can lurk in such a look ;"
But Tarquin's shape came in her mind the while,
And from her tongue " can lurk" from " cannot" took
" It cannot be," she in that sense forsook,
And turn'd it thus : " It cannot be, I find,
But such a face should bear a wicked mind :

" For even as subtle Sinon here is painted,
So sober-sad, so weary, and so mild,
As if with grief or travail he had fainted,)

* *Advisedly*—attentively.

To me came Tarquin armed ; so beguil'd ^a
 With outward honesty, but yet defil'd
 With inward vice as Priam him did cherish,
 So did I Tarquin ; so my Troy did perish

" Look, look, how listening Priam wets his eyes,
 To see those borrow'd tears that Sinon sheds
 Priam, why art thou old, and yet not wise ?
 For every tear he falls ^b a Trojan bleeds ;
 His eye drops fire, no water thence proceeds
 Those round clear pearls of his that move thy pity
 Are balls of quenchless fire to burn thy city.

" Such devils steal effects from lightless hell ;
 For Sinon in his fire doth quake with cold,
 And in that cold hot-burning fire doth dwell,
 These contraries such unity do hold
 Only to flatter fools, and make them bold .
 So Priam's trust false Sinon's tears doth flatter,
 That he finds means to burn his Troy with water."

Here, all enrag'd, such passion her assails,
 That patience is quite beaten from her breast.
 She tears the senseless Sinon with her nails,
 Comparing him to that unhappy guest
 Whose deed hath made herself herself detest
 At last she smilingly with this gives o'er ;
 " Fool ! Fool ! " quoth she, " his wounds will not be
 sore "

Thus ebbs and flows the current of her sorrow,
 And Time doth weary time with her complaining.
 She looks for night, and then she longs for morrow,
 And both she thinks too long with her remaining
 Short time seems long in sorrow's sharp sustaining

^a So beguil'd—so masked with fraud

^b Falls—lets fall

Though woe be heavy yet it seldom sleeps,
And they that watch see time how slow it creeps

Which all this time hath overslipp'd her thought,
That she with painted images hath spent
Being from the feeling of her own grief brought
By deep surmise of others detriment,
Losing her woes in shows of discontent
It easeth some, though none it ever cur'd,
To think their dolour others have endur'd

But now the mindful messenger, come back,
Brings home his lord and other company,
Who finds his Lucrece clad in mourning black,
And round about her tear distained eye
Blue circles stream'd like rainbows in the sky
These water gulls^a in her dim element
Foretell new storms to those already spent

Which when her sad beholding husband saw,
Amazedly in her sad face he stares
Her eyes, though sod in tears look'd red and raw,
Her lively colour kill'd with deadly cares
He hath no power to ask her how she fares,
But stood, like old acquaintance in a trance,
Met far from home, wondering each other's chance

At last he takes her by the bloodless hand,
And thus begins "What uncouth ill event
Hath thee befallen, that thou dost trembling stand?
Sweet love what spite hath thy fair colour spent?
Why art thou thus attir'd in discontent?"
Unmask, dear, dear, this moody heaviness,
And tell thy grief, that we may give redress'

^a *Water gulls* Stevens says the word is current among the shepherds on Salisbury Plain.

Three times with sighs she gives her sorrow fire
Ere once she can discharge one word of woe :
At length address'd * to answer his desire,
She modestly prepares to let them know
Her honour is ta'en prisoner by the foe ;
While Collatine and his consorted lords
With sad attention long to hear her words.

And now this pale swan in her watery nest
Begins the sad dirge of her certain ending :
" Few words," quoth she, " shall fit the trespass best,
Where no excuse can give the fault amending :
In me more woes than words are now depending ;
And my laments would be drawn out too long,
To tell them all with one poor tired tongue.

" Then be this all the task it hath to say :—
Dear husband, in the interest of thy bed
A stranger came, and on that pillow lay
Where thou wast wont to rest thy weary head ;
And what wrong else may be imagined
By foul enforcement might be done to me,
From that, alas ! thy Lucrece is not free.

" For in the dreadful dead of dark midnight,
With shining falchion in my chamber came
A creeping creature, with a flaming light,
And softly criel, Awake, thou Roman dame,
And entertain my love ; else lasting shame
On thee and thine this night I will inflict,
If thou my love's desire do contradict.

" For some hard-favour'd groom of thine, quoth he,
Unless thou yoke thy liking to my will,
I'll murder straight, and then I'll slaughter thee,

* Address'd—prepared.

And swear I found you where you did fulfil
The loathsome act of lust, and so did kill
The lechers in their deed this act will be
My fame, and thy perpetual infamy.

“ With this I did begin to start and cry,
And then against my heart he set his sword,
Swearing unless I took all patiently
I should not live to speak another word
So should my shame still rest upon record,
And never be forgot in mighty Rome
The adulterate death of Lucrece and her groom.

“ Mine enemy was strong, my poor self weak,
And far the weaker with so strong a fear.
My bloody judge forbade my tongue to speak,
No rightful plea might plead for justice there.
His scarlet lust came evidence to swear
That my poor beauty had purloin'd his eyes,
And when the judge is robb'd, the prisoner dies.

“ O teach me how to make mine own excuse
Or, at the least, this refuge let me find;
Though my gross blood be stain'd with this abuse,
Immaculate and spotless is my mind;
That was not forc'd; that never was inclin'd
To accessary yieldings, but still pure
Doth in her poison'd closet yet endure ”

Lo here, the helpless merchant of this loss,
With head declin'd, and voice damm'd up with woe,
With sad-set eyes, and wretched arms across,
From lips new-waxen pale begins to blow
The grief away that stops his answer so:
But wretched as he is he strives in vain;
What he breathes out his breath drinks up again.

As through an arch the violent roaring tide
Outruns the eye that doth behold his haste ;
Yet in the eddy boundeth in his pride
Back to the strait that forc'd him on so fast ;
In rage sent out, recall'd in rage, being past :
Even so he sighs, his sorrows make a saw,
To push grief on, and back the same grief draw.

Which speechless woe of his poor she attendeth,
And his untimely frenzy thus awaketh :
“ Dear lord, thy sorrow to my sorrow lendeth
Another power ; no flood by raining slaketh.
My woe too sensible thy passion maketh
More feeling-painful : let it then suffice
To drown one woe, one pair of weeping eyes.

“ And for my sake, when I might charm thee so,
For she that was thy Lucrece,—now attend me ;
Be suddenly revenged on my fall,
Thine, mine, his own ; suppose thou dost defend me
From what is past : the help that thou shalt lend me
Comes all too late, yet let the traitor die ;
For sparing justice feeds iniquity.

“ But ere I name him, you, fair lords,” quoth she,
(Speaking to those that came with Collatine)
“ Shall plight your honourable faiths to me,
With swift pursuit to venge this wrong of mine ;
For 't is a meritorious fair design
To chase injustice with revengeful arms :
Knights, by their oaths, should right poor ladies'
harms.”

At this request, with noble disposition
Each present lord began to promise aid,
As bound in knighthood to her imposition,

Longing to hear the hateful foe bewray'd.
 But she, that yet her sad task hath not said,
 The protestation stops "O speak, quoth she,
 "How may this forced stain be wip'd from me?"

"What is the quality of mine offence,
 Being constrain'd with dreadful circumstance?
 May my pure mind with the foul act dispense,
 My low-declined honour to advance?
 May any terms acquit me from this chance?
 The poison'd fountain clears itself again,
 And why not I from this compelled stain?"

With this, they all at once began to say,
 Her body's stain her mind untainted clears,
 While with a joyless smile she turns away
 The face, that map which deep impression bears
 Of hard misfortune carv'd in it with tears
 "No, no," quoth she, "no dame, hereafter living,
 By my excuse shall claim excuse's giving"

Here with a sigh, as if her heart would break,
 She throws forth Tarquyn's name "He, he," she says,
 But more than "he" her poor tongue could not
 speak,
 Till after many accents and delays,
 Untimely breathings, sick and short assays,
 She utters this "He, he, fair lords, 'tis he,
 That guides this hand to give this wound to me."

Even here she sheathed in her harmless breast
 A harmful knife, that thence her soul unsheath'd
 That blow did bail it from the deep unrest
 Of that polluted prison where it breath'd
 Her contrite sighs unto the clouds bequeath'd
 Her winged sprite, and through her wounds doth fly
 Life's lasting date from cancell'd destiny.

Stone-still, astonish'd with this deadly deed,
 Stood Collatine and all his lordly crew,
 Till Lucrece' father, that beholds her bleed,
 Himself on her self-slaughter'd body threw,
 And from the purple fountain Brutus drew
 The murderous knife, and as it left the place,
 Her blood, in poor revenge, held it in chase,

And bubbling from her breast, it doth divide
 In two slow rivers, that the crimson blood
 Circles her body in on every side,
 Who like a late-sack'd island vastly^a stood
 Bare and unpeopled, in this fearful flood
 Some of her blood still pure and red remain'd,
 And some look'd black, and that false Tarquin stain'd.

About the mourning and congealed face
 Of that black blood a watery rigol^b goes,
 Which seems to weep upon the tainted place
 And ever since, as pitying Lucrece' woes,
 Corrupted blood some watery token shows,
 And blood untainted still doth red abide,
 Blushing at that which is so putrefied

"Daughter, dear daughter," old Lucretius cries,
 "That life was mine which thou hast here depriv'd.
 If in the child the father's image lies,
 Where shall I live now Lucrece is unliv'd?
 Thou wast not to this end from me deriv'd
 If children predecease progenitors,
 We are their offspring, and they none of ours

"Poor broken glass, I often did behold
 In thy sweet semblance my old age new born,
 But now that fair fresh mirror, dim and old,

^a Vastly—like a waste

^b Rigol—circle.

Shows me a barebon'd death by time outworn ;
 O, from thy cheeks my image thou hast torn !
 And shiver'd all the beauty of my glass,
 That I no more can see what once I was

' O time, cease thou thy course, and last no longer,
 If they surcease to be that should survive.
 Shall rotten death make conquest of the stronger,
 And leave the faltering feeble souls alive ?
 The old bees die, the young possess their hive
 Then live, sweet Lucrece, live again, and see
 Thy father die, and not thy father thee !

By this starts Collatine as from a dream,
 And bids Lucretius give his sorrow place,
 And then in key-cold^a Lucrece bleeding stream
 He falls, and bathes the pale fear in his face,
 And counterfeits to die with her a space,
 Till manly shame bids him possess his breath,
 And live, to be revenged on her death

The deep vexation of his inward soul
 Hath serv'd a dumb arrest upon his tongue,
 Who, mad that sorrow should his use control,
 Or keep him from heart easing words so long,
 Begins to talk, but through his lips do throng
 Weak words, so thick come, in his poor heart's aid,
 That no man could distinguish what he said

Yet sometime Tarquin was pronounced plain,
 But through his teeth, as if the name he tore
 This windy tempest, till it blow up rain,
 Held back his sorrow's tide, to make it more,
 At last it rains, and busy winds give o'er

^a *Key-cold* So in 'Richard III,' Act I scene 2—

' Poor *key-cold* figure of a holy king '

Then son and father weep with equal strife,
Who should weep most for daughter or for wife.

The one doth call her his, the other his,
Yet neither may possess the claim they lay.
The father says, "She 's mine." "O, mine she is,"
Replies her husband: "do not take away
My sorrow's interest; let no mourner say
He weeps for her, for she was only mine,
And only must be wail'd by Collatine."

"O," quoth Lucretius, "I did give that life
Which she too early and too late^a hath spill'd."
"Woe, woe," quoth Collatine, "she was my wife,
I ow'd her, and 't is mine that she hath kill'd."
"My daughter" and "my wife" with clamours fill'd
The dispers'd air, who, holding Lucrece' life,
Answer'd their cries, "my daughter" and "my
wife."

Brutus, who pluck'd the knife[†] from Lucrece' side,
Seeing such emulation in their woe,
Began to clothe his wit in state and pride,
Burying in Lucrece' wound his folly's show.
He with the Romans was esteemed so
As silly jeering idiots are with kings,
For sportive words, and uttering foolish things.

But now he throws that shallow habit by,
Wherein deep policy did him disguise;
And arm'd his long-hid wits advisedly,
To check the tears in Collatinus' eyes.
"Thou wronged lord of Rome," quoth he, "arise;
Let my unsounded self, suppos'd a fool,
Now set thy long-experienc'd wit to school.

^a Too late—too recently.

"Why, Collatine, is woe the cure for woe?
 Do wounds help wounds, or grief help grievous deeds?
 Is it revenge to give thyself a blow,
 For his foul act by whom thy fair wife bleeds?
 Such childish humour from weak minds proceeds:
 Thy wretched wife mistook the matter so,
 To slay herself, that should have slain her foe

"Courageous Roman, do not steep thy heart
 In such relenting dew of lamentations,
 But kneel with me and help to bear thy part,
 To rouse our Roman gods with invocations,
 That they will suffer these abominations,
 (Since Rome herself in them doth stand disgrac'd,)
 By our strong arms from forth her fair streets
 chas d

' Now by the Capitol that we adore,
 And by this chaste blood so unjustly stain d,
 By heaven's fair sun that breeds the fat earth's store,
 By all our country rights in Rome maintain d
 And by chaste Lucrece soul that late complain'd^a
 Her wrongs to us and l y this bloody knife,
 We will revenge the death of this true wife '

This said, he struck his hand upon his breast,
 And kiss d the fatal knife to end his vow,
 And to his protestation urg'd the rest,
 Who, wondering at him, did his words allow^b
 Then jointly to the ground their knees they bow,
 And that deep vow which Brutus made before,
 He doth again repeat, and that they swore

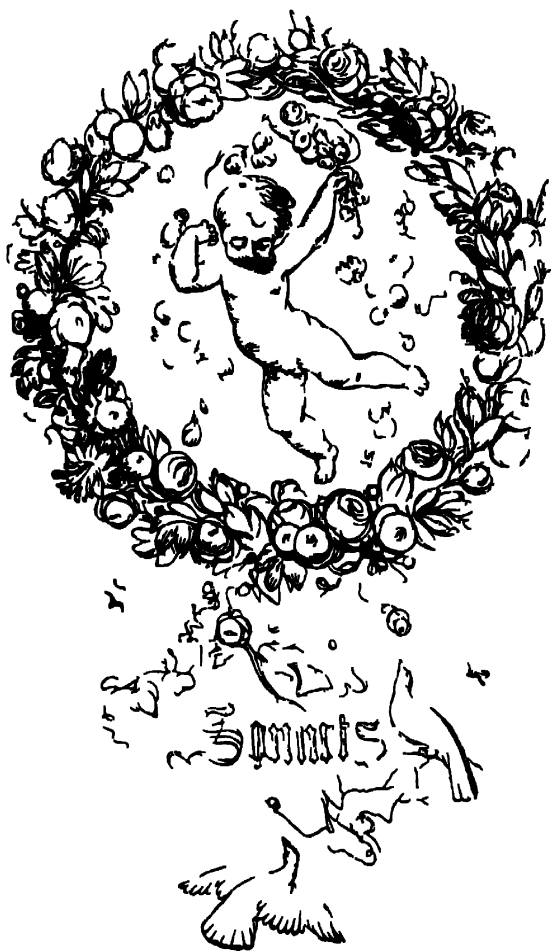
^a *Complain d* was formerly used without a subjoined preposition

^b *Allow*—approve

When they had sworn to this advised doom,
They did conclude to bear dead Lucrece thence;
To show her bleeding body thorough Rome,
And so to publish Tarquin's foul offence:
Which being done with speedy diligence,
The Romans plausibly^a did give consent
To Tarquin's everlasting banishment.

^a *Plausibly*—with expressions of applause—with acclamation.
Plausively, *applausively*.

END OF THE RAPE OF LUCRECE.



SONNETS.

I.

FROM fairest creatures we desire increase,
 That thereby beauty's rose might never die,
 But as the ripper should by time decease,
 His tender heir might bear his memory
 But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,
 Feed'st thy light with self-substantial fuel,
 Making a famine where abundance lies,
 Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel
 Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament,
 And only herald to the gaudy spring, •
 Within thine own buduriest thy content,
 And, tender churl, mak'st waste in niggarding
 Pity the world, or else this glutton be,
 To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee

II.

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow,
 And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
 Thy youth's proud livery, so gaz'd on now,
 Will be a tatter'd weed,^a of small worth held
 Then being ask'd where all thy beauty lies,
 Where all the treasure of thy lusty days,
 To say, within thine own deep sunken eyes,
 Were an all-eating shame and thriftless praise.
 How much more praise deserv'd thy beauty's use,
 If thou couldst answer—"This fair child of mine
 Shall sum my count, and make my old excuse—"
 Proving his beauty by succession thine!

^a Weed—garment.

This were to be new-made when thou art old,
And see thy blood warm when thou feel st it cold

III

Look in thy glass, and tell the face thou viewest,
Now is the time that face should form another,
Whose fresh repair if now thou not renewest,
Thou dost beguile the world, unless some mother
For where is she so fair whose unear d^a womb
Disdains the tillage of thy husbandry?
Or who is he so fond^b will be the tomb
Of his self love, to stop posterity?
Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee
Calls back the lovely April of her prime
So thou through windows of thine age shalt see,
Despite of wrinkles, this thy golden time
But if thou live, remember d not to be
Die single,^c and thine image dies with thee

IV ♀

Unthrifty loveliness, why dost thou spend
Upon thyself thy beauty's legacy?
Nature's bequest gives nothing but doth lend,
And being frank she lends to those are free
Then, beauteous niggard why dost thou abuse
The bounteous largess given thee to give?
Profitless usurer why dost thou use
So great a sum of sums yet canst not live?
For having traffic with thyself alone,
Thou of thyself thy sweet self dost deceive
Then how, when nature calls thee t be gone,
What acceptable audit canst thou leave?
The unused beauty must be tomb'd with thee,
Which, used, lives thy executor to be

^a *Unear d*—unploughed

^b *Fond*—foolish.

V.

Those hours that with gentle work did frame
 The lovely gaze where every eye doth dwell,
 Will play the tyrants to the very same,
 And that unfair^a which fairly doth excel;
 For never-resting time leads summer on
 To hideous winter, and confounds him there;
 Sap check'd with frost, and lusty leaves quite gone,
 Beauty o'ersnow'd, and bareness everywhere:
 Then, were not summer's distillation left,
 A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass,
 Beauty's effect with beauty were bereft,
 Nor it, nor no remembrance what it was.

But flowers distill'd, though they with winter meet,
 Leese^b but their show; their substance still lives
 sweet.

VI.

Then let not winter's ragged hand deface
 In thee thy summer, ere thou be distill'd:
 Make sweet some phial; treasure thou some place
 With beauty's treasure, ere it be self-kill'd.
 That use is not forbidden usury,
 Which happier^c those that pay the willing loan;
 That 's for thyself to breed another thee,
 Or ten times happier, be it ten for one;
 Ten times thyself were happier than thou art,
 If ten of thine ten times refigur'd thee:
 Then what could death do if thou shouldst depart,
 Leaving thee living in posterity?

Be not self-will'd, for thou art much too fair
 To be Death's conquest, and make worms thine
 heir.

^a *Unfair*—a verb—deprive of fairness, of beauty.

^b *Leese*—lose.

^c *Happier*—makes happy.

VII

Lo, in the orient when the gracious light
 Lifts up his burning head, each under eye
 Doth homage to his new-appearing sight,
 Serving with looks his sacred majesty,
 And having climb'd the steep-up heavenly hill,
 Resembling strong youth in his middle age,
 Yet mortal looks adore his beauty still,
 Attending on his golden pilgrimage,
 But when from high-most pitch, with weary car,
 Like feeble age, he reeleth from the day,
 The eyes, 'fore duteous, now converted are
 From his low tract, and look another way
 So thou, thyself outgoing in thy noon,
 Unlook'd on diest, unless thou get a son

VIII

Music to hear, why hear'st thou music sadly?^a
 Sweets with sweets war not, joy delights in joy
 Why lov'st thou that which thou receiv'st not gladly?
 Or else receiv'st with pleasure thine annoy?
 If the true concord of well-tuned sounds,
 By unions married, do offend thine ear,
 They do but sweetly chide thee, who confounds
 In singleness the parts that thou shouldst bear
 Mark how one string, sweet husband to another,
 Strikes each in each by mutual ordering,^b
 Resembling sire and child and happy mother,
 Who, all in one, one pleasing note do sing
 Whose speechless song, being many, seeming one,
 Sings this to thee, "thou single wilt prove none."

^a Malope thus explains this passage — "O thou whom to hear is music why hear'st thou," &c

^b If two strings are tuned in perfect unison and one only is struck, a very sensible vibration takes place in the other. This is called sympathetic vibration

IX.

Is it for fear to wet a widow's eye
 That thou consum'st thyself in single life?
 Ah! if thou issueless shalt nap to die,
 The world will wail thee, like a makeless^a wife:
 The world will be thy widow, and still weep
 That thou no form of thee hast left behind,
 When every private widow well may keep,
 By children's eyes, her husband's shape in mind
 Look, what an unthrifty in the world doth spend
 Shifts but his place, for still the world enjoys it,
 But beauty's waste hath in the world an end,
 And kept unus'd, the user so destroys it
 No love toward others in that bosom sits,
 That on himself such murderous shame commits

For shame! deny that thou bear'st love to any,
 Who for thyself art so unprovident
 Grant if thou wilt thou art beloved of many,
 But that thou none lovest is most evident;
 For thou art so possess'd with murderous hate,
 That 'gainst thyself thou stick'st not to conspire,
 Seeking that beauteous roof to ruinate,
 Which to repair should be thy chief desire
 O change thy thought, that I may change my mind!
 Shall hate be fairer lodg'd than gentle love?
 Be, as thy presence is, gracious and kind,
 Or to thyself, at least, kind-heartedness prove,
 Make thee another self, for love of me,
 That beauty still may live in thine or thee.

^a *Makeless*—*mateless* Make and mate are synonymous in our older writers.

XI.

As fast as thou shalt wane, so fast thou grow'st
In one of thine, from that which thou departest ;
And that fresh blood which youngly thou bestow'st,
Thou mayst call thine, when thou from youth convertest.

Herein lives wisdom, beauty, and increase ;
Without this, folly, age, and cold decay :
If all were minded so the times should cease,
And threescore years would make the world away.
Let those whom Nature hath not made for store,
Harsh, featureless, and rude, barrenly perish :
Look whom she best endow'd, she gave thee more ;
Which bounteous gift thou shouldst in bounty cherish ;
She carv'd thee for her seal, and meant thereby
Thou shouldst print more, nor let that copy die.

XII. ♀

When I do count the clock that tells the time,
And see the brave day sunk in hideous night ;
When I behold the violet past prime,
And sable curls, all^a silver'd o'er with white ;
When lofty trees I see barren of leaves,
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,
And summer's green all girded up in sheaves,
Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard ;
Then of thy beauty do I question make,
That thou among the wastes of time must go,
Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake,
And die as fast as they see others grow ;
And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence
Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence.

^a *All.* The original has *or*.

XIII.

O that you were yourself! but, love, you are
No longer yours than you yourself here live :
Against this coming end you should prepare,
And your sweet semblance to some other give.
So should that beauty which you hold in lease
Find no determination : then you were
Yourself again, after yourself's decease,
When your sweet issue your sweet form should bear.
Who lets so fair a house fall to decay,
Which husbandry in honour might uphold
Against the stormy gusts of winter's day,
And barren rage of death's eternal cold ?
O! none but unthrifths :—Dear my love, you know
You had a father; let your son say so.

XIV.

Not from the stars do I my judgment pluck ;
And yet methinks I have astronomy,
But not to tell of good or evil luck,
Of plagues, of dearths, or season's quality :
Nor can I fortune to brief minutes tell,
Pointing to each his thunder, rain, and wind,
Or say with princes if it shall go well,
By oft predict that I in heaven find :
But from thine eyes my knowledge I derive,
And (constant stars) in them I read such art,
As truth and beauty shall together thrive,
If from thyself to store thou wouldst convert :
Or else of thee this I prognosticate,
Thy end is truth's and beauty's doom and date.

XV.

When I consider everything that grows
Holds in perfection but a little moment,

That this nuge state presenteth nought but shows
 Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;
 When I perceive that men as plants increase,
 Cheered and check'd even by the selfsame sky;
 Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,
 And wear their brave state out of memory;
 Then the conceit of this inconstant stay
 Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,
 Where wasteful time debateth with decay,
 To change your day of youth to sullied night;
 And, all in war with Time, for love of you,
 As he takes from you, I engraft you new.

XVI.

But wherefore do not you a mightier way
 Make war upon this bloody tyrant, Time?
 And fortify yourself in your decay
 With means more blessed than my barren rhyme?
 Now stand you on the top of happy hours;
 And many maiden gardens, yet unset,
 With virtuous wish would bear your living flowers,
 Much liker than your painted counterfeit:^a
 So should the lines of life that life repair,
 Which this, Time's pencil, or my pupil pen,
 Neither in inward worth, nor outward fair,^b
 Can make you live yourself in eyes of men.
 To give away yourself keeps yourself still;
 And you must live, drawn by your own sweet skill.

XVII.

Who will believe my verse in time to come,
 If it were fill'd with your most high deserts?
 Though yet, Heaven knows, it is but as a tomb
 Which hides your life, and shows not half your parts,

^a Counterfeit—portrait.

^b Fair—beauty. The word is used in the same sense in the 18th Sonnet.

If I could write the beauty of your eyes,
 And in fresh numbers number all your graces,
 The age to come would say, this poet lies,
 Such heavenly touches ne'er touch'd earthly faces.
 So should my papers, yellow'd with their age,
 Be scorn'd, like old men of less truth than tongue ;
 And your true rights be term'd a poet's rage,
 And stretched metre of an antique song :
 But were some child of yours alive that time,
 You should live twice ;—in it, and in my rhyme.

XVIII.

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day ?
 Thou art more lovely and more temperate :
 Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
 And summer's lease hath all too short a date :
 Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
 And often is his gold complexion dimm'd ;
 And every fair from fair sometime declines,
 By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimm'd ;^a
 But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
 Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest ;
 Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
 When in eternal lines to time thou growest ;
 So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
 So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

XIX.

Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws,
 And make the earth devour her own sweet brood ;
 Pluck the keen teeth from the fierce tiger's jaws,
 And burn the long-liv'd phoenix in her blood ;
 Make glad and sorry seasons, as thou fleet'st,
 And do whate'er thou wilt, swift-footed Time,
 To the wide world, and all her fading sweets ;
 But I forbid thee one most heinous crime :

^a *Untrimm'd*—undecorated.

O carve not with thy hours my love's fair brow,
 Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen,
 Him in thy course untainted do allow,
 For beauty's pattern to succeeding men
 Yet, do thy worst, old Time despite thy wrong,
 My love shall in my verse ever live young

XX

A woman's face, with nature's own hand painted,
 Hast thou, the master mistress of my passion,
 A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted
 With shifting change, as is false women's fashion,
 An eye more bright than theirs less false in rolling,
 Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth,
 A man in hue, all hues in his controlling,
 Which steals men's eyes, and women's souls amazeth.
 And for a woman wert thou first created,
 Till Nature as she wrought thee, fell a-doting,
 And by addition me of thee defeated,
 By adding one thing to my purpose nothing
 But since she prick'd thee out for women's pleasure,
 Mine be thy love, and thy love's use their treasure

XXI

So is it not with me as with that muse,
 Stirr'd by a painted beauty to his verse,
 Who heaven itself for ornament doth use,
 And every fair with his fair doth rehearse,
 Making a complement^a of proud compare,
 With sun and moon, with earth and sea's rich gems,
 With April's firstborn flowers, and all things rare
 That heaven's air in his huge rondure^b hems
 O let me, true in love, but truly write,
 And then believe me, my love is as fair
 As any mother's child, though not so bright
 As those gold candles fix'd in heaven's air

^a Complement—union^b Rondure—circumference

Let them say more that like of hearsay well;
I will not praise, that purpose not to sell.

XXII.

My glass shall not persuade me I am old,
So long as youth and thou are of one date;
But when in thee time's furrows I behold,
Then look I death my days should expiate.
For all that beauty that doth cover thee
Is but the seemly raiment of my heart,
Which in thy breast doth live, as thine in me;
How can I then be elder than thou art?
O therefore, love, be of thyself so wary,
As I not for myself but for thee will;
Bearing thy heart, which I will keep so chary
As tender nurse her babe from faring ill.

Presume not on thy heart when mine is slain;
Thou gav'st me thine, not to give back again.

XXIII.

As an unperfect actor on the stage,
Who with his fear is put besides his part,
Or some fierce thing replete with too much rage,
Whose strength's abundance weakens his own heart;
So I, for fear of trust, forget to say
The perfect ceremony of love's rite,
And in mine own love's strength seem to decay,
O'ercharg'd with burthen of mine own love's might.
O let my books be then the eloquence
And dumb presagers of my speaking breast;
Who plead for love, and look for recompence,
More than that tongue that more hath more ex-
press'd.

O learn to read what silent love hath writ:
To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.

XXIV.

Mine eye hath play'd the painter, and hath stel'd
 Thy beauty's form in table^a of my heart;
 My body is the frame wherein 't is held,
 And perspective it is best painter's art.
 For through the painter must you see his skill,
 To find where your true image pictur'd lies,
 Which in my bosom's shop is hanging still,
 That hath his windows glazed with thine eyes.
 Now see what good turns eyes for eyes have done;
 Mine eyes have drawn thy shape, and thine for me
 Are windows to my breast, where-through the sun
 Delights to peep, to gaze therein on thee;
 Yet eyes this cunning want to grace their art,
 They draw but what they see, know not the heart.

XXV.

Let those who are in favour with their stars,
 Of public honour and proud titles boast,
 Whilst I, whom fortune of such triumph bars,
 Unlook'd for joy in that I honour most.
 Great princes' favourites their fair leaves spread
 But as the marigold at the sun's eye;
 And in themselves their pride lies buried,
 For at a frown they in their glory die.
 The painful warrior famoused for fight,
 After a thousand victories once foil'd,
 Is from the book of honour razed quite,
 And all the rest forgot for which he toil'd:
 Then happy I, that love and am belov'd
 Where I may not remove, nor be remov'd.

^a *Table*, though sometimes used in the sense of a picture, more commonly means the tabular surface upon which a picture is painted.

XXVI.

Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage
 Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,
 To thee I send this written embassy,
 To witness duty, not to show my wit.
 Duty so great, which wit so poor as mine
 May make seem bare, in wanting words to show it;
 But that I hope some good conceit of thine
 In thy soul's thought, all naked, will bestow it:
 Till whatsoever star that guides by moving,
 Points on me graciously with fair aspect,
 And puts apparel on my tatter'd loving,
 To show me worthy of thy sweet respect:
 Then may I dare to boast how I do love thee,
 Till then, not show my head where thou mayst prove me.

XXVII.

Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,
 The dear repose for limbs with travel tir'd;
 But then begins a journey in my head,
 To work my mind, when body's work 's expir'd:
 For then my thoughts (from far where I abide)
 Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,
 And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,
 Looking on darkness which the blind do see:
 Save that my soul's imaginary sight
 Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,
 Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,
 Makes black night beauteous, and her old face new.
 Lo, thus, by day my limbs, by night my mind,
 For thee, and for myself, no quiet find.

XXVIII.

How can I then return in happy plight,
 That am debarr'd the benefit of rest?
 When day's oppression is not eas'd by night,
 But day by night and night by day oppress'd?

And each, though enemies to either's reign,
 Do in consent shake hands to torture me,
 The one by toil, the other to complain
 How far I toil, still farther off from thee.
 I tell the day, to please him, thou art bright,
 And dost him grace when clouds do blot the heaven :
 So flatter I the swart-complexion'd night ;
 When sparkling stars twire^a not, thou gild'st the even.
 But day doth daily draw my sorrows longer,
 And night doth nightly make grief's length seem
 stronger.

XXIX.

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
 I all alone beweepe my outcast state,
 And trouble deaf Heaven with my bootless cries,
 And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
 Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
 Featur'd like him, like him with friends possess'd,
 Desiring this man's art, and that^a man's scope,
 With what I most enjoy contented least ;
 Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
 Haply I think on thee,—and then my state
 (Like to the lark at break of day arising
 From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate ;
 For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings,
 That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

XXX.

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
 I summon up remembrance of things past,
 I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
 And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste :

^a *Twire*. Gifford, in a note upon Ben Jonson's 'Sad Shepherd,' explains that in the passage before us the meaning is "when the stars do not gleam or appear at intervals."

Then can I drown an eye, unus'd to flow,
 For precious friends hid in death's dateless^a night,
 And weep afresh love's long-since cancell'd woe,
 And moan the expense of many a vanish'd sight.^b
 Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
 And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
 The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,
 Which I new pay as if not paid before.
 But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
 All losses are restor'd, and sorrows end.

XXXI.

Thy bosom is endeared with all hearts,
 Which I by lacking have supposed dead;
 And there reigns love and all love's loving parts,
 And all those friends which I thought buried.
 How many a holy and obsequious^c tear
 Hath dear religious love stolen from mine eye,
 As interest of the dead, which now appear
 But things remov'd, that hidden in thee lie!
 Thou art the grave where buried love doth live,
 Hung with the trophies of my lovers gone,
 Who all their parts of me to thee did give;
 That due of many now is thine alone:
 Their images I lov'd I view in thee,
 And thou (all they) hast all the all of me.

XXXII.

If thou survive my well-contented day,
 When that churl Death my bones with dust shall cover,
 And shalt by fortune once more re-survey
 These poor rude lines of thy deceased lover,

^a *Dateless*—endless—having no certain time of expiration.

^b If we understand *expense* to be used as analogous to *passing away*, there is no difficulty in this line. What we expend is gone from us; and so the poet means the *expense* of many a vanished sight.

^c *Obsequious*—funereal.

Compare them with the bettering of the time;
 And though they be outstripp'd by every pen,
 Reserve^a them for my love, not for their rhyme,
 Exceeded by the height of happier men.
 O then vouchsafe me but this loving thought!
 "Had my friend's muse grown with this growing age,
 A dearer birth than this his love had brought,
 To march in ranks of better equipage:
 But since he died, and poets better prove,
 Theirs for their style I'll read, his for his love."

XXXI¹.

Full many a glorious morning have I seen
 Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,
 Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
 Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchymy;
 Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
 With ugly rack^b on his celestial face,
 And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
 Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace:
 Even so my sun one early morn did shine
 With all triumphant splendour on my brow;
 But out! alack! he was but one hour mine,
 The region cloud hath mask'd him from me now.
 Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth;
 Suns of the world may stain, when heaven's sun
 staineth.^c

XXXIV.

Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day,
 And make me travel forth without my cloak,

^a *Reserve*—the same as *preserve*.

^b *Rack*. Tooke, in his full discussion of the meaning of this word, holds that *rack* means "merely that which is *reeked*."

^c *Stain* and *staineth* are here used with the signification of a verb neuter. Suns of the world may be stained as heaven's sun is stained.

To let base clouds o'ertake me in my way,
 Hiding thy bravery in their rotten smoke?
 'T is not enough that through the cloud thou break,
 To dry the rain on my storm-beaten face,
 For no man well of such a salve can speak,
 That heals the wound, and cures not the disgrace:
 Nor can thy shame give physic to my grief;
 Though thou repent, yet I have still the loss:
 The offender's sorrow lends but weak relief
 To him that bears the strong offence's cross.
 Ah! but those tears are pearl which thy love sheds,
 And they are rich, and ransom all ill deeds.

XXXV.

No more be griev'd at that which thou hast done:
 Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud;
 Clouds and eclipses stain both moon and sun,
 And loathsome canker lives in sweetest bud.
 All men make faults, and even I in this,
 Authorising thy trespass with compare,
 Myself corrupting, salving thy amiss,^a
 Excusing thy sins more than thy sins are:
 For to thy sensual fault I bring in sense,
 (Thy adverse party is thy advocate,)
 And 'gainst myself a lawful plea commence:
 Such civil war is in my love and hate,
 That I an accessory needs must be
 To that sweet thief which sourly robs from me.

XXXVI.

Let me confess that we two must be twain,
 Although our undivided loves are one:
 So shall those blots that do with me remain,
 Without thy help, by me be borne alone.

^a *Amiss*—fault.

In our two loves there is but one respect,
 Though in our lives a separable^a spite,
 Which though it alter not love's sole effect,
 Yet doth it steal sweet hours from love's delight.
 I may not evermore acknowledge thee,
 Lest my bewailed guilt should do thee shame;
 Nor thou with public kindness honour me,
 Unless thou take that honour from thy name:
 But do not so; I love thee in such sort,
 As, thou being mine, mine is thy good report.

XXXVII.

As a decrepit father takes delight
 To see his active child do deeds of youth,
 So I, made lame by fortune's dearest spite,
 Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth;
 For whether beauty, birth, or wealth, or wit,
 Or any of these all, or all, or more,
 Entitled in thy parts do crowned sit,
 I make my love engrafted to this store:
 So then I am not lame, poor, nor despis'd,
 Whilst that this shadow doth such substance give,
 That I in thy abundance am suffic'd,
 And by a part of all thy glory live.
 Look what is best, that best I wish in thee;
 This wish I have; then ten times happy me!

XXXVIII.

How can my muse want subject to invent,
 While thou dost breathe, that pour'st into my verse
 Thine own sweet argument, too excellent
 For every vulgar paper to rehearse?
 O, give thyself the thanks, if aught in me
 Worthy perusal stand against thy sight;
 For who's so dumb that cannot write to thee,
 When thou thyself dost give invention light?

^a *Separable*—separating.

Be thou the tenth muse, ten times more in worth
 Than those old nine which rhymers invoke;
 And he that calls on thee, let him bring forth
 Eternal numbers to outlive long date.

If my slight muse do please these curious days,
 The pain be mine, but thine shall be the praise.

XXXIX.

O, how thy worth with manners may I sing,
 When thou art all the better part of me?
 What can mine own praise to mine own self bring?
 And what is 't but mine own, when I praise thee?
 Even for this let us divided live,
 And our dear love lose name of single one,
 That by this separation I may give
 That due to thee, which thou deserv'st alone.
 O absence, what a torment wouldst thou prove,
 Were it not thy sour leisure gave sweet leave
 To entertain the time with thoughts of love,
 (Which time and thoughts so sweetly doth deceive,)
 And that thou teachest how to make one twain,
 By praising him here, who doth hence remain!

XL.

Take all my loves, my love, yea, take them all;
 What hast thou then more than thou hadst before?
 No love, my love, that thou mayst true love call;
 All mine was thine, before thou hadst this more.
 Then if for my love thou my love receivest,
 I cannot blame thee for^a my love thou usest;
 But yet be blam'd, if thou thyself deceivest
 By wilful taste of what thyself refuseth.
 I do forgive thy robbery, gentle thief,
 Although thou steal thee all my poverty;

^a For here signifies because.

And yet, love knows, it is a greater grief
 To bear love's wrong, than hate's known injury.
 Lascivious grace, in whom all ill well shows,
 Kill me with spites ; yet we must not be foes.

XLI.

Those pretty wrongs that liberty commits
 When I am sometime absent from thy heart,
 Thy beauty and thy years full well befits,
 For still temptation follows where thou art.
 Gentle thou art, and therefore to be won,
 Beauteous thou art, therefore to be assail'd ;
 And when a woman woos, what woman's son
 Will sourly leave her till she have prevail'd ?
 Ah me ! but yet thou might'st my seat forbear,
 And chide thy beauty and thy straying youth,
 Who lead thee in their riot even there
 Where thou art forc'd to break a two-fold truth,
 Hers, by thy beauty tempting her to thee,
 Thine, by thy beauty being false to me.

XLII.

That thou hast her, it is not all my grief,
 And yet it may be said I lov'd her dearly ;
 That she hath thee, is of my wailing chief,
 A loss in love that touches me more nearly.
 Loving offenders, thus I will excuse ye :—
 Thou dost love her, because thou knew'st I love her ;
 And for my sake even so doth she abuse me,
 Suffering my friend for my sake to approve her.
 If I lose thee, my loss is my love's gain,
 And, losing her, my friend hath found that loss ;
 Both find each other, and I lose both twain,
 And both for my sake lay on me this cross :
 But here 's the joy ; my friend and I are one ;
 Sweet flattery ! then she loves but me alone.

XLIII.

When most I wink, then do mine eyes best see,
 For all the day they view things unrespected;^a
 But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee,
 And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed;
 Then thou whose shadow shadows doth make bright,
 How would thy shadow's form form happy show
 To the clear day with thy much clearer light,
 When to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so!
 How would (I say) mine eyes be blessed made
 By looking on thee in the living day,
 When in dead night thy fair imperfect shade
 Through heavy sleep on sightless eyes doth stay?
 All days are nights to see, till I see thee,
 And nights, bright days, when dreams do show thee
 me.^b

XLIV.

If the dull substance of my flesh were thought,
 Injurious distance should not stop my way;
 For then, despite of space, I would be brought
 From limits far remote, where thou dost stay.
 No matter then, although my foot did stand
 Upon the farthest earth remov'd from thee,
 For nimble thought can jump both sea and land,
 As soon as think the place where he would be.
 But ah! thought kills me, that I am not thought,
 To leap large lengths of miles when thou art gone,
 But that, so much of earth and water wrought,^c
 I must attend time's leisure with my moan;
 Receiving nought by elements so slow
 But heavy tears, badges of either's woe:

^a *Unrespected*—unregarded.^b *Thee me*—thee to me.^c A passage in *Henry V.* explains this:—"He is pure air and fire; and the dull elements of earth and water never appear in him."

XLV.

The other two, slight air and purging fire,
 Are both with thee, wherever I abide;
 The first my thought, the other my desire,
 These present-absent with swift motion slide.
 For when these quicker elements are gone
 In tender embassy of love to thee,
 My life, being made of four, with two alone
 Sinks down to death, oppress'd with melaucholy;
 Until life's composition be recur'd
 By those swift messengers return'd from thee,
 Who even but now come back again, assur'd
 Of thy fair health, recounting it to me:
 This told, I joy; but then no longer glad,
 I send them back again, and straight grow sad.

XLVI.

Mine eye and heart are at a mortal war,
 How to divide the conquest of thy sight;
 Mine eye my heart thy^a picture's sight would bar,
 My heart mine eye the freedom of that right.
 My heart doth plead that thou in him dost lie,
 (A closet never pierc'd with crystal eyes,)
 But the defendant doth that plea deny,
 And says in him thy fair appearance lies.
 To 'cide^b this title is impannelled
 A quest^c of thoughts, all tenants to the heart;
 And by their verdict is determined
 The clear eye's moiety,^d and the dear heart's part:

^a *Thy*. The original has *their*; and it is remarkable that the same typographical error occurs four times in this one Sonnet—a pretty convincing proof that no competent or authorised person superintended the publication.

^b *'Cide*. Malone explains that this is a contraction of *decide*. The original reads *side*.

^c *Quest*—inquest or jury.

^d *Moiety*—portion.

As thus ; mine eye's due is thine outward part,
And my heart's right thine inward love of heart.

XLVII.

Betwixt mine eye and heart a league is took,
And each doth good turns now unto the other :
When that mine eye is famish'd for a look,
Or heart in love with sighs himself doth smother,
With my love's picture then my eye doth feast,
And to the painted banquet bids my heart ;
Another time mine eye is my heart's guest,
And in his thoughts of love doth share a part :
So, either by thy picture or my love,
Thyself away art present still with me ;
For thou not farther than my thoughts canst move,
And I am still with them, and they with thee ;
Or if they sleep, thy picture in my sight
Awakes my heart to heart's and eye's delight.

XLVIII.

How careful was I when I took my way,
Each trifle under truest bars to thrust,
That, to my use, it might unused stay
From hands of falsehood, in sure wards of trust !
But thou, to whom my jewels trifles are,
Most worthy comfort, now my greatest grief,
Thou, best of dearest, and mine only care,
Art left the prey of every vulgar thief.
Thee have I not lock'd up in any chest,
Save where thou art not, though I feel thou art,
Within the gentle closure of my breast,
From whence at pleasure thou mayst come and part ;
And even thence thou wilt be stolen I fear,
For truth proves thievish for a prize so dear.

XLIX.

Against that time, if ever that time come,
When I shall see thee frown on my defects,

Whenas^a thy love hath cast his utmost sum,
 Call'd to that audit by advis'd respects ;
 Against that time, when thou shalt strangely pass,
 And scarcely greet me with that sun, thine eye,
 When love, converted from the thing it was,
 Shall reasons find of settled gravity ;
 Against that time do I ensconce^b me here
 Within the knowledge of mine own desert,
 And this my hand against myself uprear,
 To guard the lawful reasons on thy part :
 To leave poor me thou hast the strength of laws,
 Since, why to love, I can allege no cause.

L.

How heavy do I journey on the way,
 When what I seek—my weary travel's end—
 Doth teach that ease and that repose to say,
 " Thus far the miles are measur'd from thy friend !"
 The beast that bears me, tired with my woe,
 Plods dully on, to bear that weight^a in me,
 As if by some instinct the wretch did know
 His rider lov'd not speed, being made from thee .
 The bloody spur cannot provoke him on
 That sometimes anger thrusts into his hide,
 Which heavily he answers with a groan,
 More sharp to me than spurring to his side ;
 For that same groan doth put this in my mind,
 My grief lies onward, and my joy behind.

LI.

Thus can my love excuse the slow offence
 Of my dull bearer, when from thee I speed :
 From where thou art why should I haste me thence ?
 Till I return, of posting is no need.
 O, what excuse will my poor beast then find,
 When swift extremity can seem but slow ?

^a *Ifhenas*—when.^b *Ensconce*—fortify.

Then should I spur, though mounted on the wind;
 In winged speed no motion shall I know:
 Then can no horse with my desire keep pace;
 Therefore desire, of perfect love being made,
 Shall neigh (no dull flesh) in his fiery race;
 But love, for love, thus shall excuse my jade;
 Since from thee going he went wilful slow,
 Towards thee I'll run, and give him leave to go.

LII.

So am I as the rich, whose blessed key
 Can bring him to his sweet up-locked treasure,
 The which he will not every hour survey,
 For blunting the fine point of seldom pleasure.
 Therefore are feasts so solemn and so rare,
 Since seldom coming, in the long year set,
 Like stones of worth they thinly placed are,
 Or captain^a jewels in the carcanet.^b
 So is the time that keeps you, as my chest,
 Or as the wardrobe which the robe doth hide,
 To make some special instant special-blest,
 By new unfolding his imprison'd pride.
 Blessed are you, whose worthiness gives scope,
 Being had, to triumph, being lack'd, to hope

LIII.

What is your substance, whereof are you made,
 That millions of strange shadows on you tend?
 Since every one hath, every one, one's shade,
 And you, but one, can every shadow lend.
 Describe Adonis, and the counterfeit^c
 Is poorly imitated after you;

^a Captain—used adjectively for *chief*.

^b Carcanet—necklace.

^c Counterfeit—portrait.

On Helen's cheek all art of beauty set,
 And you in Grecian tires are painted new :
 Speak of the spring, and foizon of the year ;^a
 The one doth shadow of your beauty show,
 The other as your bounty doth appear,
 And you in every blessed shape we know.
 In all external grace you have some part,
 But you like none, none you, for constant heart.

LIV.

O how much more doth beauty beauteous seem,
 By that sweet ornament which truth doth give !
 The rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem
 For that sweet odour which doth in it live.
 The canker-blooms^b have full as deep a dye
 As the perfumed tincture of the roses,
 Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly
 When summer's breath their masked buds discloses :
 But, for their virtue only is their show,
 They live unwoo'd, and unrespectful fade ;
 Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so ;
 Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours made :
 And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth,
 When that shall fade, by verse distils your truth.

LV.

Not marble, not the gilded monuments
 Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme ;
 But you shall shine more bright in these contents
 Than unswept stone, besmear'd with sluttish time.
 When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
 And broils root out the work of masonry,
 Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
 The living record of your memory.

^a *Foizon* is plenty ; and the *foizon of the year* is the autumn, or plentiful season.

^b *Canker-blooms*—the flowers of the canker or dog-rose.

'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity
 Shall you pace forth ; your praise shall still find room,
 Even in the eyes of all posterity
 That wear this world out to the ending doom.
 So, till the judgment that yourself arise,
 You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.

LVI.

Sweet love, renew thy force ; be it not said,
 Thy edge should blunter be than appetite,
 Which but to-day by feeding is allay'd,
 To-morrow sharpen'd in his former might :
 So, love, be thou : although to-day thou fill
 Thy hungry eyes, even till they wink with fulness,
 To-morrow see again, and do not kill
 The spirit of love with a perpetual dulness.
 Let this sad interim like the ocean be
 Which parts the shore, where two contracted-new
 Come daily to the banks, that, when they see
 Return of love, more blest may be the view ;
 Or call it winter, which, being full of care,
 Makes summer's welcome thrice more wish'd, more
 rare.

LVII.

Being your slave, what should I do but tend
 Upon the hours and times of your desire ?
 I have no precious time at all to spend,
 Nor services to do, till you require.
 Nor dare I chide the world-without-end hour,
 Whilst I, my sovereign, watch the clock for you,
 Nor think the bitterness of absence sour,
 When you have bid your servant once adieu ;
 Nor dare I question with my jealous thought
 Where you may be, or your affairs suppose,
 But, like a sad slave, stay and think of nought,
 Save, where you are how happy you make those :

So true a fool is love, that in your will
(Though you do anything) he thinks no ill.

LVIII.

That God forbid, that made me first your slave,
I should in thought control your times of pleasure,
Or at your hand the account of hours to crave,
Being your vassal, bound to stay your leisure !
O, let me suffer (being at your beck)
The imprison'd absence of your liberty,
And patience, tame to sufferance, bide each check
Without accusing you of injury.
Be where you list ; your charter is so strong,
That you yourself may privilege your time :
Do what you will, to you it doth belong
Yourself to pardon of self-doing crime.
I am to wait, though waiting so be hell ;
Not blame your pleasure, be it ill or well.

LIX.

If there be nothing new, but that which is
Hath been before, how are our brains beguil'd,
Which labouring for invention bear amiss
The second burthen of a former child !
O, that record could with a backward look,
Even of five hundred courses of the sun,
Show me your image in some antique book,
Since mind at first in character was done !
That I might see what the old world could say
To this composed wonder of your frame ;
Whether we are mended, or whe'r^a better they,
Or whether revolution be the same.
O ! sure I am, the wits of former days
To subjects worse have given admiring praise.

^a *Whe'r*—whether.

LX.

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
 So do our minutes hasten to their end ;
 Each changing place with that which goes before,
 In sequent toil all forwards do contend.
 Nativity, once in the main of light,^a
 Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crown'd,
 Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
 And Time, that gave, doth now his gift confound.
 Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth,
 And delves the parallels in beauty's brow ;
 Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,
 And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow.
 And yet, to times in hope, my verse shall stand,
 Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.

LXI.

Is it thy will thy image should keep open
 My heavy eyelids to the weary night ?
 Dost thou desire my slumbers should be broken,
 While shadows, like to thee, do mock my sight ?
 Is it thy spirit that thou send'st from thee
 So far from home, into my deeds to pry ;
 To find out shames and idle hours in me,
 The scope and tenor of thy jealousy ?
 O no ! thy love, though much, is not so great ;
 It is my love that keeps mine eye awake ;
 Mine own true love that doth my rest defeat,
 To play the watch man ever for thy sake :
 For thee watch I, whilst thou dost wake elsewhere,
 From me far off, with others all-too-near.

^a *Main of light.* As the *main* of waters would signify the great body of waters, so the *main of light* signifies the mass or flood of light, into which a new-born child is launched.

LXII.

Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye,
 And all my soul, and all my every part;
 And for this sin there is no remedy,
 It is so grounded inward in my heart.
 Methinks no face so gracious ^a is as mine,
 No shape so true, no truth of such account,
 And for myself mine own worth do define,
 As I all other in all worths surmount.
 But when my glass shows me myself indeed,
 Beated ^b and chopp'd with tann'd antiquity,
 Mine own self-love quite contrary I read,
 Self so self-loving were iniquity.

'T is thee (myself) that for myself I praise,
 Painting my age with beauty of thy days.

LXIII.

Against my love shall be, as I ^a am now,
 With Time's injurious hand crush'd and o'erworn;
 When hours have drain'd his blood, and fill'd his
 brow
 With lines and wrinkles; when his youthful morn
 Hath travell'd on to age's steepy night;
 And all those beauties, whereof now he's king,
 Are vanishing or vanish'd out of sight,
 Stealing away the treasure of his spring;
 For such a time do I now fortify
 Against confounding age's cruel knife,
 That he shall never cut from memory
 My sweet love's beauty, though my lover's life.
 His beauty shall in these black lines be seen,
 And they shall live, and he in them, still green.

^a Gracious—beautiful.

^b Beated, used as the participle of the verb to beat.

LXIV.

When I have seen by Time's fell hand defac'd
 The rich-proud cost of outworn buried age ;
 When sometime lofty towers I see down-ras'd,
 And brass eternal, slave to mortal rage ;
 When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
 Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
 And the firm soil win of the wat'ry main,
 Increasing store with loss, and loss with store ;
 When I have seen such interchange of state,
 Or state itself confounded to decay ;
 Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminatè—
 That time will come and take my love away.
 This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
 But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

LXV.

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
 But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
 How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
 Whose action is no stronger than a flower ?
 O, how shall summer's honey breath hold out
 Against the wreckful siege of battering days,
 When rocks impregnable are not so stout,
 Nor gates of steel so strong, but time decays ?
 O fearful meditation ; where, alack !
 Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid ?
 Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back ?
 Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid ?

* In *Troilus and Cressida*, Ulysses says—

“ Time hath, my lord, a *wallet* at his back,
 In which he puts alms for oblivion.”

Time's *chest* and Time's *wallet* are the same ; they are the depositories of what was once great and beautiful, passed away, perished, and forgotten.

O none, unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

LXVI.

Tir'd with all these, for restful death I cry,—
As, to behold desert a beggar born,
And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,
And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
And gilded honour shamefully misplac'd,
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
And right perfection wrongfully disgrac'd,
And strength by limping sway disabled,
And art made tongue-tied by authority,
And folly (doctor-like) controlling skill,
And simple truth miscall'd simplicity,^a
And captive good attending captain ill :
Tir'd with all these, from these would I be gone,
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone.

LXVII.

Ah ! wherefore with infection should he live,
And with his presence grace impiety,
That sin by him advantage should achieve,
And lace^b itself with his society ?
Why should false painting imitate his cheek,
And steal dead seeing of his living hue ?
Why should poor beauty indirectly seek
Roses of shadow, since his rose is true ?
Why should he live now Nature bankrupt is,
Beggard of blood to blush through lively veins ?
For she hath no exchequer now but his,
And, proud of many, lives upon his gains.
O, him she stores, to show what wealth she had
In days long since, before these last so bad.

^a *Simplicity* is here used for folly.

^b *Lace*—embellish—ornament.

LXVIII.

Thus is his cheek the map of days outworn,
 When beauty liv'd and died as flowers do now,
 Before these bastard signs of fair^a were borne,
 Or durst inhabit on a living brow ;
 Before the golden tresses of the dead,
 The right of sepulchres, were shorn away,
 To live a second life on second head,
 Ere beauty's dead fleece made another gay :
 In him those holy antique hours are seen,
 Without all ornament, itself, and true,
 Making no summer of another's green,
 Robbing no old to dress his beauty new ;
 And him as for a map doth Nature store,
 To show false Art what beauty was of yore.

LXIX.

Those parts of thee that the world's eye doth view
 Want nothing that the thought of hearts can mend :
 All tongues (the voice of souls) give thee that due,
 Uttering bare truth, even so as foes commend.
 Thine outward thus with outward praise is crown'd ;
 But those same tongues that give thee so thine own,
 In other accents do this praise confound,
 By seeing farther than the eye hath shown.
 They look into the beauty of thy mind,
 And that, in guess, they measure by thy deeds ;
 Then (churls) their thoughts, although their eyes were
 kind,
 To thy fair flower add the rank smell of weeds :
 But why thy odour matcheth not thy show,
 The solve^b is this,—that thou dost common grow.

^a Fair—beauty.

^b Solve. Malouin reads *solves* in the sense of *solution*. We have no parallel example of the use of *solve* as a noun.

LXX.

That thou art blam'd shall not be thy defect,
 For slander's mark was ever yet the fair;
 The ornament of beauty is suspect,^a
 A crow that flies in heaven's sweetest air.
 So thou be good, slander doth but approve
 Thy worth the greater, being woo'd of time;
 For canker vice the sweetest buds doth love,
 And thou present'st a pure unstained prime.
 Thou hast pass'd by the ambush of young days,
 Either not assail'd, or victor being charg'd;
 Yet this thy praise cannot be so thy praise,
 To tie up envy, evermore enlarg'd:
 If some suspect of ill mask'd not thy show,
 Then thou alone kingdoms of hearts shouldst owe.^b

LXXI.

No longer mourn for me when I am dead
 Than you shall hear the surly ~~g~~allen bell
 Give warning to the world that I am fled
 From this vile world, with vilest worms to dwell:
 Nay, if you read this line, remember not
 The hand that writ it: for I love you so,
 That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
 If thinking on me then should make you woe.
 O if (I say) you look upon this verse,
 When I perhaps compounded am with clay,
 Do not so much as my poor name rehearse;
 But let your love even with my life decay:
 Lest the wise world should look into your moan,
 And mock you with me after I am gone.

LXXII.

O, lest the world should task you to recite
 What merit liv'd in me, that you should love

^a *Suspect*—suspicion.^b *Owe*—own.

After my death,—dear love, forget me quite,
 For you in me can nothing worthy prove ;
 Unless you would devise some virtuous lie,
 To do more for me than mine own desert,
 And hang more praise upon deceased I
 Than niggard truth would willingly impart :
 O, lest your true love may seem false in this,
 That you for love speak well of me untrue,
 My name be buried where my body is,
 And live no more to shame nor me nor you.
 For I am sham'd by that which I bring forth,
 And so should you, to love things nothing worth.

LXXIII.

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
 When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
 Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
 Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
 In me thou seest the twilight of such day
 As after sunset fadeth in the west,
 Which by and by black night doth take away,
 Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
 In me thou seest the glowing of such fire,
 That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
 As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
 Consum'd with that which it was nourish'd by.
 This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
 To love that well which thou must leave ere long :

LXXIV.

But be contented : when that fell arrest
 Without all bail shall carry me away,
 My life hath in this line some interest,
 Which for memorial still with thee shall stay.
 When thou reviewest this, thou dost review
 The very part was consecrate to thee.

The earth can have but earth, which is his due;
 My spirit is thine, the better part of me :
 So then thou hast but lost the drags of life,
 The prey of worms, my body being dead;
 The coward conquest of a wretch's knife,
 Too base of thee to be remembered.

The worth of that, is that which it contains,
 And that is this, and this with thee remains.

LXXV.

So are you to my thoughts, as food to life,
 Or as sweet-season'd showers are to the ground;
 And for the peace of you I hold such strife
 As 'twixt a miser and his wealth is found :
 Now proud as an enjoyer, and anon
 Doubting the filching age will steal his treasure;
 Now counting best to be with you alone,
 Then better'd that the world may see my pleasure :
 Sometime all full with feasting on your sight,
 And by and by clean starved for a look;
 Possessing or pursuing no delight,
 Save what is had or must from you be took.
 Thus do I pine and surfeit day by day,
 Or gluttoning on all, or all away.

LXXVI.

Why is my verse so barren of new pride?
 So far from variation or quick change?
 Why, with the time, do I not glance aside
 To new-found methods and to compounds strange?
 Why write I still all one, ever the same,
 And keep invention in a noted weed,*
 That every word doth almost tell my name,
 Showing their birth, and where they did proceed?

* *A noted weed*—a dress known and familiar, through being always the same.

O know, sweet love, I always write of you,
And you and love are still my argument ;
So all my best is dressing old words new,
Spending again what is already spent :
For as the sun is daily new and old,
So is my love still telling what is told.

LXXVII.

Thy glass will show thee how thy beauties wear,
Thy dial how thy precious minutes waste ;
The vacant leaves thy mind's imprint will bear,
And of this book this learning mayst thou taste.
The wrinkles which thy glass will truly show,
Of mouthed graves will give thee memory ;
Thou by thy dial's shady stealth mayst know
Time's thievish progress to eternity.
Look, what thy memory cannot contain,
Commit to these waste blanks, and thou shalt find
Those children nurs'd, deliver'd from thy brain,
To take a new acquaintance of thy mind.
These offices, so oft as thou wilt look,
Shall profit thee, and much enrich thy book.

LXXVIII.

So oft have I invok'd thee for my muse,
And found such fair assistance in my verse,
As every alien pen hath got my use,
And under thee their poesy disperse.
Thine eyes, that taught the dumb on high to sing,
And heavy ignorance aloft to fly,
Have added feathers to the learned's wing,
And given grace a double majesty.
Yet be most proud of that which I compile,
Whose influence is thine, and born of thee :
In others' works thou dost but mend the style,
And arts with thy sweet graces graced be ;
But thou art all my art, and dost advance
As high as learning my rude ignorance

LXXIX.

Whilst I alone did call upon thy aid,
 My verse alone had all thy gentle grace ;
 But now my gracious numbers are decay'd,
 And my sick muse doth give another place.
 I grant, sweet love, thy lovely argument
 Deserves the travail of a worthier pen ;
 Yet what of thee thy poet doth invent,
 He robs thee of, and pays it thee again.
 He lends thee virtue, and he stole that word
 From thy behaviour ; beauty doth he give,
 And found it in thy cheek ; he can afford
 No praise to thee but what in thee doth live.
 Then thank him not for that which he doth say,
 Since what he owes thee thou thyself dost pay.

LXXX.

O, how I faint when I of you do write,
 Knowing a better spirit doth use your name.
 And in the praise thereof spends all his might,
 To make me tongue-tied, speaking of your fame !
 But since your worth (wide as the ocean is)
 The humble as the proudest sail doth bear,
 My saucy bark, inferior far to his,
 On your broad main doth wilfully appear.
 Your shallowest help will hold me up afloat,
 Whilst he upon your soundless deep doth ride ;
 Or, being wick'd, I am a worthless boat,
 He of tall building, and of goodly pride :
 Then if he thrive, and I be cast away,
 The worst was this ;—my love was my decay.

LXXXI.

Or I shall live your epitaph to make,
 Or you survive when I in earth am rotten ;
 From hence your memory death cannot take,
 Although in me each part will be forgotten.

Your name from hence immortal life shall have,
 Though I, once gone, to all the world must die :
 The earth can yield me but a common grave,
 When you entombed in men's eyes shall lie.
 Your monument shall be my gentle verse,
 Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read ;
 And tongues to be, your being shall rehearse,
 When all the breathers of this world are dead ;
 You still shall live (such virtue hath my pen)
 Where breath most breathes,—even in the mouths of
 men.

LXXXII.

I grant thou wert not married to my muse,
 And therefore mayst without attaint o'erlook
 The dedicated words which writers use
 Of their fair subject, blessing every book.
 Thou art as fair in knowledge as in hue,
 Finding thy worth a limit past my praise ;
 And therefore art enforc'd to seek anew
 Some fresher stamp of the time-bettering days.
 And do so, love, yet when they have devis'd
 What strained touches rhetoric can lend,
 Thou truly fair wert truly sympathiz'd,
 In true plain words, by thy true-telling friend ;
 And their gross painting might be better us'd
 Where cheeks need blood ; in thee it is abus'd.

LXXXIII.

I never saw that you did painting need,
 And therefore to your fair no painting set.
 I found, or thought I found, you did exceed
 The barren tender of a poet's debt :
 And therefore have I slept in your report,
 That you yourself, being extant, well might show
 How far a modern^a quill doth come too short,
 Speaking of worth, what worth in you doth grow.

^a Modern—trite—common.

This silence for my sin you did impute,
 Which shall be most my glory, being dumb ;
 For I impair not beauty being mute,
 When others would give life, and bring a tomb.
 There lives more life in one of your fair eyes
 Than both your poets can in praise devise.

LXXXIV.

Who is it that says most ? which can say more
 Than this rich praise,—that you alone are you ?
 In whose confine immured is the store
 Which should example where your equal grew ?
 Lean penury within that pen doth dwell,
 That to his subject lends not some small glory ;
 But he that writes of you, if he can tell
 That you are you, so dignifies his story,
 Let him but copy what in you is writ,
 Not making worse what nature made so clear,
 And such a counterpart shall ~~form~~ his wit,
 Making his style admired everywhere.

You to your beauteous blessings add a curse,
 Being fond on praise, which makes your praises
 worse.

LXXXV.

My tongue-tied muse in manners holds her still,
 While comments of your praise, richly compil'd,
 Reserve^a their character with golden quill,
 And precious phrase by all the muses fil'd.
 I think good thoughts, while others write good words,
 And, like unletter'd clerk, still cry " Amen "
 To every hymn that able spirit affords,
 In polish'd form of well-refined pen.
 Hearing you prais'd, I say, " 'T is so, 't is true,"
 And to the most of praise add something more ;
 But that is in my thought, whose love to you,
 Though words come hindmost, holds his rank before.

^a *Reserve* is here again used for *preserve*.

Then others for the breath of words respect,
Me for my dumb thoughts, speaking in effect.

LXXXVI.

Was it the proud full sail of his great verse,
Bound for the prize of all-too-precious you,
That did my ripe thoughts in my brain inherse,
Making their tomb the womb wherein they grew ?
Was it his spirit, by spirits taught to write
Above a mortal pitch, that struck me dead ?
No, neither he, nor his compeers by night
Giving him aid, my verse astonished.
He, nor that affable familiar ghost
Which nightly gulls him with intelligence,^a
As victors, of my silence cannot boast ;
I was not sick of any fear from thence.

But when your countenance fil'd^b up his line,
Then lack'd I matter ; that enfeebled mine.

LXXXVII.

Farewell ! thou art too dear for my possessing,
And like enough thou know'st thy estimate :
The charter of thy worth gives thee releasing ;
My bonds in thee are all determinate.
For how do I hold thee but by thy granting ?
And for that riches where is my deserving ?
The cause of this fair gift in me is wanting,
And so my patent back again is swerving.
Thyself thou gav'st, thy own worth then not knowing,
Or me, to whom thou gav'st it, else mistaking ;
So thy great gift, upon misprision growing,
Comes home again, on better judgment making.

Thus have I had thee, as a dream doth flatter,
In sleep a king, but, waking, no such matter.

^a Steevens conjectures that this is an allusion to Dr. Dee's pretended intercourse with a familiar spirit.

^b *Fild*—gave the last polish.

LXXXVIII.

When thou shalt be dispos'd to set me light,
 And place my merit in the eye of scorn,
 Upon thy side against myself I 'll fight,
 And prove thee virtuous, though thou art forsworn.
 With mine own weakness being best acquainted,
 Upon thy part I can set down a story
 Of faults conceal'd, wherein I am attainted ;
 That thou, in losing me, shalt win much glory :
 And I by this will be a gainer too ;
 For bending all my loving thoughts on thee,
 The injuries that to myself I do,
 Doing thee vantage, double-vantage me.
 Such is my love, to thee I so belong,
 That for thy right myself will bear all wrong.

LXXXIX.

Say that thou didst forsake me for some fault,
 And I will comment upon that offence :
 Speak of my lameness, and I straight will halt ;
 Against thy reasons making no defence.
 Thou canst not, love, disgrace me half so ill,
 To set a form upon desired change,
 As I 'll myself disgrace : knowing thy will,
 I will acquaintance strangle, and look strange :
 Be absent from thy walks : and in my tongue
 Thy sweet-beloved name no more shall dwell ;
 Lest I (too much profane) should do it wrong,
 And haply of our old acquaintance tell.
 For thee, against myself I 'll vow debate,
 For I must ne'er love him whom thou dost hate.

XC.

Then hate me when thou wilt ; if ever, now ;
 Now while the world is bent my deeds to cross,

Join with the spite of fortune, make me bow,
 And do not drop in for an after-loss :
 Ah! do not, when my heart hath scap'd this sorrow
 Come in the rearward of a conquer'd woe;
 Give not a windy night a rainy morrow,
 To linger out a purpos'd overthrow.
 If thou wilt leave me, do not leave me last,
 When other petty griefs have done their spite,
 But in the onset come ; so shall I taste
 At first the very worst of fortune's might ;
 And other strains of woe, which now seem woe,
 Compar'd with loss of thee will not seem so.

XCI.

Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,
 Some in their wealth, some in their body's force;
 Some in their garments, though new-fangled ill;
 Some in their hawks and hounds, some in their horse;
 And every humour hath his adjunct pleasure,
 Wherein it finds a joy above the rest;
 But these particulars are not my measure,
 All these I better in one general best.
 Thy love is better than high birth to me,
 Richer than wealth, prouder than garments' cost,
 Of more delight than hawks or horses be;
 And, having thee, of all men's pride I boast.
 Wretched in this alone, that thou mayst take
 All this away, and me most wretched make.

XCII.

But do thy worst to steal thyself away,
 For term of life thou art assured mine;
 And life no longer than thy love will stay,
 For it depends upon that love of thine.
 Then need I not to fear the worst of wrongs,
 When in the least of them my life hath end.

I see a better state to me belongs
Than that which on thy humour doth depend.
Thou canst not vex me with inconstant mind,
Since that my life on thy revolt doth lie.
O what a happy title do I find,
Happy to have thy love, happy to die !
But what 's so blessed-fair that fears no blot ?—
Thou mayst be false, and yet I know it not :

XCIII.

So shall I live, supposing thou art true,
Like a deceived husband ; so love's face
May still seem love to me, though alter'd-new ;
Thy looks with me, thy heart in other place :
For there can live no hatred in thine eye,
Therefore in that I cannot know thy change.
In many's looks the false heart's history
Is writ, in moods and frowns and wrinkles strange ;
But Heaven in thy creation did decree
That in thy face sweet love should ever dwell ;
Whate'er thy thoughts or thy heart's workings be,
Thy looks should nothing thence but sweetness tell.
How like Eve's apple doth thy beauty grow,
If thy sweet virtue answer not thy show !

XCIV.

They that have power to hurt and will do none,
That do not do the thing they most do show,
Who, moving others, are themselves as stone,
Unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow ;
They rightly do inherit Heaven's graces,
And husband nature's riches from expense ;
They are the lords and owners of their faces,
Others but stewards of their excellence.
The summer's flower is to the summer sweet,
Though to itself it only live and die ;

But if that flower with base infection meet,
 The basest weed outbraves his dignity :
 For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds ;
 Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

XCV.

How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame,
 Which, like a canker in the fragrant rose,
 Doth spot the beauty of thy budding name !
 O, in what sweets dost thou thy sins enclose !
 That tongue that tells the story of thy days,
 Making lascivious comments on thy sport,
 Cannot dispraise but in a kind of praise ;
 Naming thy name blesses an ill report.
 O, what a mansion have those vices got
 Which for their habitation chose out thee !
 Where beauty's veil doth cover every blot,
 And all things turn to fair, that eyes can see !
 Take heed, dear heart, of this large privilege ;
 The hardest knife ill-used doth lose his edge.

XCVI.

Some say, thy fault is youth, some wantonness ;
 Some say, thy grace is youth and gentle sport ;
 Both grace and faults are lov'd of more and less :
 Thou mak'st faults graces that to thee resort.
 As on the finger of a throned queen
 The basest jewel will be well esteem'd ;
 So are those errors that in thee are seen
 To truths translated, and for true things deem'd.
 How many lambs might the stern wolf betray,
 If like a lamb he could his looks translate !
 How many gazers mightst thou lead away,
 If thou wouldst use the strength of all thy state !
 But do not so ; I love thee in such sort,
 As, thou being mine, mine is thy good report.

XCVII.

How like a winter hath my absence been
 From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year!
 What freezings have I felt, what dark days seen!
 What old December's bareness everywhere!
 And yet this time remov'd^a was summer's time;
 The teeming autumn, big with rich increase,
 Bearing the wanton burden of the prime,
 Like widow'd wombs after their lords' decease:
 Yet this abundant issue seem'd to me
 But hope of orphans, and unfather'd fruit;
 For summer and his pleasures wait on thee,
 And, thou away, the very birds are mute;
 Or, if they sing, 't is with so dull a cheer,
 That leaves look pale, dreading the winter's near.

XCVIII.

From you have I been absent in^a the spring,
 When proud-pied April dress'd in all his trim,
 Hath put a spirit of youth in everything,
 That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leap'd with him.
 Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
 Of different flowers in odour and in hue,
 Could make me any summer's story tell,
 Or from their proud lap pluck them where they
 grew:
 Nor did I wonder at the lilies white,
 Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose;
 They were but sweet, but figures of delight,
 Drawn after you, you pattern of all those.
 Yet seem'd it winter still, and, you away,
 As with your shadow I with these did play:

^a Malone explains this as, "This time in which I was remote or absent from thee."

XCIX.

The forward violet thus did I chide ;—
 Sweet thief, whence didst thou steal thy sweet that smells,
 If not from my love's breath ? The purple pride
 Which on thy soft cheek for complexion dwells,
 In my love's veins thou hast too grossly dy'd.
 The lily I condemned for thy hand,
 And buds of marjoram had stolen thy hair :
 The roses fearfully on thorns did stand,
 One blushing shame, another white despair ;
 A third, nor red nor white, had stolen of both,
 And to his robbery had annex'd thy breath ;
 But for his theft, in pride of all his growth
 A vengeful canker eat him up to death.

More flowers I noted, yet I none could see,
 But sweet or colour it had stolen from thee

C.

Where art thou, Muse, that thou forgett'st so long
 To speak of that which gives thee all thy might ?
 Spend'st thou thy fury on some worthless song,
 Darkening thy power, to lend base subjects light ?
 Return, forgetful Muse, and straight redeem
 In gentle numbers time so idly spent ;
 Sing to the ear that doth thy lays esteem
 And gives thy pen both skill and argument.
 Rise, restive Muse, my love's sweet face survey,
 If Time have any wrinkle graven there ;
 If any, be a satire to decay,
 And make Time's spoils despised everywhere.

Give my love fame faster than Time wastes life ;
 So thou prevent'st his scythe and crooked knife.

CI.

O truant Muse, what shall be thy amends
 For thy neglect of truth in beauty dy'd ?

Both truth and beauty on my love depends ;
 So dost thou too, and therein dignified.
 Make answer, Muse : wilt thou not haply say,
 " Truth needs no colour with his colour fix'd,
 Beauty no pencil, beauty's truth to lay ;
 But best is best, if never intermix'd ?"—
 Because he needs no praise, wilt thou be dumb ?
 Excuse not silence so ; for it lies in thee
 To make him much outlive a gilded tomb,
 And to be prais'd of ages yet to be.
 Then do thy office, Muse ; I teach thee how
 To make him seem long hence as he shows now.

CII.

My love is strengthen'd, though more weak in seeming ;
 I love not less, though less the show appear ;
 That love is merchandiz'd, whose rich esteeming
 The owner's tongue doth publish everywhere.
 Our love was new, and then but in the spring,
 When I was wont to greet it with my lays ;
 As Philomel in summer's front doth sing,
 And stops his pipe in growth of ripe days :
 Not that the summer is less pleasant now
 Than when her mournful hymns did hush the night,
 But that wild music burthens every bough,
 And sweets grown common lose their dear delight.
 Therefore, like her, I sometime hold my tongue,
 Because I would not dull you with my song.

CIII.

Alack ! what poverty my muse brings forth,
 That having such a scope to show her pride,
 The argument, all bare, is of more worth,
 Than when it hath my added praise beside.
 O blame me not if I no more can write !
 Look in your glass, and there appears a face

That over-goes my blunt invention quite,
 Dulling my lines, and doing me disgrace.
 Were it not sinful then, striving to mend,
 To mar the subject that before was well ?
 For to no other pass my verses tend,
 Than of your graces and your gifts to tell ;
 And more, much more, than in my verse can sit,
 Your own glass shows you, when you look in it.

CIV.

To me, fair friend, you never can be old,
 For as you were when first your eye I ey'd,
 Such seems your beauty still. Three winters' cold
 Have from the forests shook three summers' pride ;
 Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turn'd
 In process of the seasons have I seen ;
 Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burn'd,
 Since first I saw you fresh, which yet are green.
 Ah ! yet doth beauty, like a dial hand,
 Steal from his figure, and no pace perceiv'd ;
 So your sweet hue, which methinks still doth stand,
 Hath motion, and mine eye may be deceiv'd.
 For fear of which, hear this, thou age unbred,
 Ere you were born, was beauty's summer dead.

CV.

Let not my love be call'd idolatry,
 Nor my beloved as an idol show,
 Since all alike my songs and praises be,
 To one, of one, still such, and ever so.
 Kind is my love to-day, to-morrow kind,
 Still constant in a wondrous excellence ;
 Therefore my verse, to constancy confin'd,
 One thing expressing, leaves out difference.
 Fair, kind, and true, is all my argument,
 Fair, kind, and true, varying to other words ;

And in this change is my invention spent,
 Three themes in one, which wondrous scope affords.
 Fair, kind, and true, have often liv'd alone,
 Which three, till now, never kept seat in one.

CVI.

When in the chronicle of wasted time
 I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
 And beauty making beautiful old rhyme,
 In praise of ladies dead and lovely knights,
 Then in the blazon of sweet beauty's best,
 Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,
 I see their antique pen would have express'd
 Even such a beauty as you master now.
 So all their praises are but prophecies
 Of this our time, all you prefiguring ;
 And, for they look'd but with divining eyes,
 They had not skill enough your worth to sing :
 For we, which now behold these present days,
 Have eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to praise.

CVII.

Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul
 Of the wide world dreaming on things to come,
 Can yet the lease of my true love control,
 Suppos'd as forfeit to a confin'd doom.
 The mortal moon hath her eclipse endur'd,
 And the sad augurs mock their own presage ;
 Incertainties now crown themselves assur'd,
 And peace proclaims olives of endless age.
 Now with the drops of this most balmy time
 My love looks fresh, and Death to me subscribes,*
 Since spite of him I 'll live in this poor rhyme,
 While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes.

* *Subscribes*—submits—acknowledges as a superior.

And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.

CVIII.

What 's in the brain that ink may character,
Which hath not figur'd to thee my true spirit ?
What 's new to speak, what now to register,
That may express my love, or thy dear merit ?
Nothing, sweet boy ; but yet, like prayers divine,
I must each day say o'er the very same ;
Counting no old thing old, thou mine, I thine,
Even as when first I hallow'd thy fair name.
So that eternal love in love's fresh case
Weighs not the dust and injury of age,
Nor gives to necessary wrinkles place,
But makes antiquity for aye his page ;
Finding the first conceit of love there bred,
Where time and outward form would show it
dead.

CIX.

O, never say that I was false of heart,
Though absence seem'd my flame to qualify !
As easy might I from myself depart,
As from my soul, which in thy breast doth lie :
That is my home of love : if I have rang'd,
Like him that travels, I return again ;
Just to the time, not with the time exchang'd,—
So that myself bring water for my stain.
Never believe, though in my nature reign'd
All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood,
That it could so preposterously be stain'd,
To leave for nothing all thy sum of good ;
For nothing this wide universe I call,
Save thou, my rose ; in it thou art my all.

CX.

Alas, 't is true, I have gone here and there,
 And made myself a motley^a to the view,
 Gor'd^b mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most
 dear,

Made old offences of affections new.
 Most true it is, that I have look'd on truth
 Askance and strangely; but, by all above,
 These blanches^c gave my heart another youth,
 And worse essays prov'd thee my best of love.
 Now all is done, have^d what shall have no end :
 Mine appetite I never more will grind
 On newer proof, to try an older friend,
 A God in love, to whom I am confin'd.

Then give me welcome, next my heaven the best,
 Even to thy pure and most most loving breast.

CXI.

O, for my sake do you with Fortune chide,
 The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
 That did not better for my life provide,
 Than public means, which public manners breeds.
 Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
 And almost thence my nature is subdued
 To what it works in, like the dyer's hand :
 Pity me then, and wish I were renew'd ;

^a Motley was the dress of the domestic fool, or jester ; and thus the buffoon himself came to be called a *motley*.

^b *Gor'd*—wounded.

^c *Blanches*—deviations.

^d *Have*. This is the word of the old copy. The reading of all modern editions is—

“ Now all is done, *save* what shall have no end.”

“ Now all is done ” cleanly applies to the *blanches*, the *worse essays* ; but the poet then adds, “ *have* thou what shall have no end,”—my constant affection, my undivided friendship.

Whilst, like a willing patient, I will drink
 Potions of eysell,^a 'gainst my strong infection
 No bitterness that I will bitter think,
 Nor double penance, to correct correction.
 Pity me then, dear friend, and I assure ye,
 Even that your pity is enough to cure me.

CXII.

Your love and pity doth the impression fill
 Which vulgar scandal stamp'd upon my brow;
 For what care I who calls me well or ill,
 So you o'ergreen my bad, my good allow?^b
 You are my all-the-world, and I must strive
 To know my shames and praises from your tongue;
 None else to me, nor I to none alive,
 That my steel'd sense or changes, right or wrong.
 In so profound abysm I throw all care
 Of other's voices, that my adder's sense
 To critic and to flatterer stopped are.
 Mark how with my neglect I do dispense:—
 You are so strongly in my purpose bred,
 That all the world besides methinks are dead.

CXIII.

Since I left you, mine eye is in my mind;
 And that which governs me to go about
 Doth part his function, and is partly blind,
 Seems seeing, but effectually is out;
 For it no form delivers to the heart
 Of bird, of flower, or shape, which it doth latch;^c
 Of his quick objects hath the mind no part,
 Nor his own vision holds what it doth catch;
 For if it see the rud'st or gentlest sight,
 The most sweet favour,^d or deformed'st creature,

^a *Eysell*—vinegar.^c *Latch* signifies to lay hold of.^b *Allow*—approve.^d *Favour*—countenance.

The mountain or the sea, the day or night,
 The crow, or dove, it shapes them to your feature.
 Incapable of more, replete with you,
 My most true mind thus maketh mine untrue.*

CXIV.

Or whether doth my mind, being crown'd with you,
 Drink up the monarch's plague, this flattery,
 Or whether shall I say mine eye saith true,
 And that your love taught it this alchymy,
 To make of monsters and things indigest
 Such cherubins as your sweet self resemble,
 Creating every bad a perfect best,
 As fast as objects to his beams assemble?
 O, 't is the first; 't is flattery in my seeing,
 And my great mind most kingly drinks it up:
 Mine eye well knows what with his gust is 'greeing,
 And to his palate doth prepare the cup:
 If it be poison'd, 't is the lesser sin
 That mine eye loves it, and doth first begin.

CXV.

Those lines that I before have writ, do lie;
 Even those that said I could not love you dearer;
 Yet then my judgment knew no reason why
 My most full flame should afterwards burn clearer.
 But reckoning time, whose million'd accidents
 Creep in 'twixt vows, and change decrees of kings,
 Tan sacred beauty, blunt the sharp'st intents,
 Divert strong minds to the course of altering things;
 Alas! why, fearing of Time's tyranny,
 Might I not then say, "Now I love you best,"
 When I was certain o'er incertainty,
 Crowning the present, doubting of the rest?
 Love is a babe; then might I not say so,
 To give full growth to that which still doth grow?

* *Untrue* is here used as a substantive.

CXVI.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
 Admit impediments. Love is not love
 Which alters when it alteration finds,
 Or bends with the remover to remove :
 O no ; it is an ever-fixed mark,
 That looks on tempests, and is never shaken ;
 It is the star to every wandering bark,
 Whose worth 's unknown, although his height be taken.
 Love 's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
 Within his bending sickle's compass come ;
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
 If this be error, and upon me prov'd,
 I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

CXVII.

Accuse me thus ; that I have scanted all
 Wherein I should your great deserts repay ;
 Forgot upon your dearest love to call,
 Whereto all bonds do tie me day by day ;
 That I have frequent been with unknown minds,
 And given to time your own dear-purchas'd right ;
 That I have hoisted sail to all the winds
 Which should transport me farthest from your sight.
 Book both my wilfulness and errors down,
 And on just proof surmise accumulate,
 Bring me within the level of your frown,
 But shoot not at me in your waken'd hate :
 Since my appeal says, I did strive to prove
 The constancy and virtue of your love.

CXVIII.

Like as, to make our appetites more keen,
 With eager^a compounds we our palate urge ;

^a *Eager*—sour, the French *aigre*

As, to prevent our maladies unseen,
 We sicken to shun sickness, when we purge ;
 Even so, being full of your ne'er-cloying sweetness,
 'To bitter sauces did I frame my feeding,
 And, sick of welfare, found a kind of meetness
 To be diseas'd, ere that there was true needing.
 Thus policy in love, to anticipate
 The ills that were not, grew to faults assured,
 And brought to medicine a healthful state,
 Which, rank of goodness, would by ill be cured.
 But thence I learn, and find the lesson true,
 Drugs poison him that so fell sick of you.

CXIX.

What potions have I drunk of Syren tears,
 Distill'd from limbecs foul as hell within,
 Applying fears to hopes, and hopes to fears,
 Still losing when I saw myself to win !
 What wretched errors hath my heart committed,
 Whilst it hath thought itself so blessed never !
 How have mine eyes out of their spheres been fitted,^a
 In the distraction of this madding fever !
 O benefit of ill ! now I find true
 That better is by evil still made better ;
 And ruin'd love, when it is built anew,
 Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far greater.
 So I return rebuk'd to my content,
 And gain by ill thrice more than I have spent.

CXX.

That you were once unkind, befriends me now,
 And for that sorrow, which I then did feel,
 Needs must I under my transgression bow,
 Unless my nerves were brass or hammer'd steel.
 For if you were by my unkindness shaken,
 As I by yours, you have pass'd a hell of time ;

^a *Fitted*—subjected to fits.

And I, a tyrant, have no leisure taken
 To weigh how once I suffer'd in your crime.
 O that our night of woe might have remember'd^a
 My deepest sense, how hard true sorrow hits,
 And soon to you, as you to me, then tender'd
 The humble salve which wounded bosoms fits !
 But that your trespass now becomes a fee ;
 Mine ransoms yours, and yours must ransom me.

CXXI.

'T is better to be vile than vile esteem'd,
 When not to be receives reproach of being,
 And the just pleasure lost, which is so deem'd
 Not by our feeling, but by others' seeing.
 For why should others' false adulterate eyes
 Give salutation to my sportive blood ?
 Or on my frailties why are frailer spies,
 Which in their wills count bad what I think good ?
 No.—I am that I am ; and they that level
 At my abuses, reckon up their own :
 I may be straight, though they themselves be bevel ;^b
 By their rank thoughts my deeds must not be shown ;
 Unless this general evil they maintain,—
 All men are bad, and in their badness reign.

CXXII.

Thy gift, thy tables, are within my brain
 Full character'd with lasting memory,
 Which shall above that idle rank remain,
 Beyond all date, even to eternity :
 Or at the least so long as brain and heart
 Have faculty by nature to subsist ;
 Till each to raz'd oblivion yield his part
 Of thee, thy record never can be miss'd.

^a *Remember'd*—reminded.^b *Bevel*—bent in an angle.

That poor retention could not so much hold,^a
 Nor need I tallies thy dear love to score;
 Therefore to give them from me was I bold,
 To trust those tables that receive thee more:
 To keep an adjunct to remember thee,
 Were to import forgetfulness in me.

CXXIII.

No! Time, thou shalt not boast that I do change:
 Thy pyramids built up with newer might
 To me are nothing novel, nothing strange;
 They are but dressings of a former sight.
 Our dates are brief, and therefore we admire
 What thou dost foist upon us that is old;
 And rather make them born to our desire,
 Than think that we before have heard them told.
 Thy registers and thee I both defy,
 Not wondering at the present nor the past;
 For thy records and what we see do lie,
 Made more or less by thy continual haste:
 This I do vow, and this shall ever be,
 I will be true, despite thy scythe and thee;

CXXIV.

If my dear love were but the child of state,
 It might for Fortune's bastard be unfather'd,
 As subject to Time's love, or to Time's hate,
 Weeds among weeds, or flowers with flowers gather'd.
 No, it was builded far from accident;
 It suffers not in smiling pomp, nor falls
 Under the blow of thrall'd discontent,
 Whereto the inviting time our fashion calls:

^a Malone says, "*That poor retention* is the table-book given to him by his friend, incapable of retaining, or rather of containing, so much as the tablet of the brain."

It fears not policy, that heretic,
Which works on leases of short-number'd hours,
But all alone stands hugely politic,
That it nor grows with heat, nor drowns with showers.
To this I witness call the fools of time,
Which die for goodness, who have liv'd for crime.

CXXV.

Were it aught to me I bore the canopy,
With my extern the outward honouring,
Or laid great bases for eternity,
Which prove more short than waste or ruining ?
Have I not seen dwellers on form and favour
Lose all, and more, by paying too much rent,
For compound sweet foregoing simple savour,
Pitiful thrivers, in their gazing spent ?
No,—let me be obsequious in thy heart,
And take thou my oblation, poor but free,
Which is not mix'd with seconds,^a knows no art,
But mutual render, only me for thee.
Hence, thou suborn'd informer! a true soul,
When most impeach'd, stands least in thy control.

CXXVI.

O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy power
Dost hold Time's fickle glass, his sickle, hour;
Who hast by waning grown, and therein show'st
Thy lovers withering, as thy sweet self grow'st !
If Nature, sovereign mistress over wrack,
As thou goest onwards, still will pluck thee back,
She keeps thee to this purpose, that her skill
May time disgrace, and wretched minutes kill.
Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure ;
She may detain, but not still keep her treasure :

^a *Seconds.* The poet's friend has his chief oblation; no seconds, or inferior persons, are mixed up with his tribute of affection.

Her audit, though delay'd, answer'd must be,
And her quietus is to render thee.

CXXVII.

In the old age black was not counted fair,
Or if it were, it bore not beauty's name;
But now is black beauty's successive heir,
And beauty slander'd with a bastard shame:
For since each hand hath put on nature's power,
Faining the soul with art's false borrow'd face,
Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy hour,
But is profan'd, if not lives in disgrace.
Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,
Her eyes so suited; and they mourners seem
At such, who, not born fair, no beauty lack,
Slandering creation with a false esteem:
Yet so they mourn, becoming of their woe,
That every tongue says, beauty should look so.

CXXVIII.

How oft, when thou, my music, music play'st,
Upon that blessed wood whose motion sounds
With thy sweet fingers, when thou gently sway'st
The wiry concord that mine ear confounds,
Do I envy those jacks,* that nimble leap
To kiss the tender inward of thy hand,
Whilst my poor lips, which should that harvest reap,
At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand!
To be so tickled, they would change their state
And situation with those dancing chips,
O'er whom thy fingers walk with gentle gait,
Making dead wood more bless'd than living lips.
Since saucy jacks so happy are in this,
Give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss.

* *Jacks*—the small hammers, moved by the keys, which strike the strings of a virginal.

CXXIX.

The expense of spirit in a waste of shame
 Is lust in action; and till action, lust
 Is perjur'd, murderous, bloody, full of blame,
 Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust;
 Enjoy'd no sooner, but despised straight;
 Past reason hunted; and no sooner had,
 Past reason hated, as a swallow'd bait,
 On purpose laid to make the taker mad:
 Mad in pursuit, and in possession so;
 Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme;
 A bliss in proof,—and prov'd, a very woe;
 Before, a joy propos'd; behind, a dream:
 All this the world well knows; yet none knows well
 To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

CXXX.

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
 Coral is far more red than her lips' red:
 If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
 If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
 I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,
 But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
 And in some perfumes is there more delight
 Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
 I love to hear her speak,—yet well I know
 That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
 I grant I never saw a goddess go,—
 My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground;
 And yet, by Heaven, I think my love as rare
 As any she belied with false compare.

CXXXI.

Thou art as tyrannous, so as thou art,
 As those whose beauties proudly make them cruel;

For well thou know'st to my dear doting heart
 Thou art the fairest and most precious jewel.
 Yet, in good faith, some say that thee behold,
 Thy face hath not the power to make love groan
 To say they err, I dare not be so bold,
 Although I swear it to myself alone.
 And, to be sure that is not false I swear,
 A thousand groans, but thinking on thy face,
 One on another's neck, do witness bear
 Thy black is fairest in my judgment's place.
 In nothing art thou black, save in thy deeds,
 And thence this slander, as I think, proceeds.

CXXXII.

Thine eyes I love, and they, as pitying me,
 Knowing thy heart, torment me with disdain ;
 Have put on black, and loving mourners be,
 Looking with pretty ruth upon my pain.
 And truly not the morning sun of heaven
 Better becomes the grey cheeks of the east,
 Nor that full star that ushers in the even
 Doth half that glory to the sober west,
 As those two mourning eyes become thy face .
 O, let it then as well beseem thy heart
 To mourn for me, since mourning doth thee grace,
 And suit thy pity like in every part.
 Then will I swear beauty herself is black,
 And all they foul that thy complexion lack.

CXXXIII.

Reshew that heart that makes my heart to groan
 For that deep wound it gives my friend and me!
 Is 't not enough to torture me alone,
 But slave to slavery my sweet'st friend must be ?
 Me from myself thy cruel eye hath taken,
 And my next self thou harder hast engross'd ;

Of him, myself, and thee, I am forsaken ;
 A torment thrice three-fold thus to be cross'd.
 Prison my heart in thy steel bosom's ward,
 But then my friend's heart let my poor heart bail ;
 Who e'er keeps me, let my heart be his guard ;
 Thou canst not then use rigour in my gaol :
 And yet thou wilt ; for I, being pent in thee,
 Perforce am thine, and all that is in me.

CXXXIV.

So now I have confess'd that he is thine,
 And I myself am mortgag'd to thy will ;
 Myself I 'll forfeit, so that other mine
 Thou wilt restore, to be my comfort still :
 But thou wilt not, nor he will not be free,
 For thou art covetous, and he is kind !
 He learn'd but, surety-like, to write for me,
 Under that bond that him as fast doth bind.
 The statute^a of thy beauty thou wilt take,
 Thou usurer, that putt'st forth all to use,
 And sue a friend, came debtor for my sake ;
 So him I lose through my unkind abuse.
 Him have I lost ; thou hast both him and me ;
 He pays the whole, and yet am I not free.

CXXXV.

Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy will,
 And wilt to boot, and wilt in over-plus ;
 More than enough am I that vex thee still,
 To thy sweet will making addition thus.
 Wilt thou, whose will is large and spacious,
 Not once vouchsafe to hide my will in thine ?
 Shall will in others seem right gracious,
 And in my will no fair acceptance shine ?

^a Statute security obligation.

The sea, all water, yet receives rain still,
 And in abundance addeth to his store ;
 So thou, being rich in will, add to thy will
 One will of mine, to make thy large will more.
 Let no unkind, no fair beseechers kill ;
 Think all but one, and me in that one *Will*.

CXXXVI.

If thy soul check thee that I come so near,
 Swear to thy blind soul that I was thy *Will*,
 And will, thy soul knows, is admitted there ;
 Thus far for love, my love-suit, sweet, fulfil.
Will will fulfil the treasure of thy love,
 Ay, fill it full with wills, and my will one,
 In things of great receipt with ease we prove ;
 Among a number one is reckon'd none.
 Then in the number let me pass untold,
 Though in thy stores' account I one must be ;
 For nothing hold me, so it please thee hold
 That nothing me, a something sweet to thee :
 Make but my name thy love, and love that still,
 And then thou lov'st me,—for my name is *Will*.

CXXXVII.

Thou blind fool, Love, what dost thou to mine eyes,
 That they behold, and see not what they see ?
 They know what beauty is, see where it lies,
 Yet what the best is, take the worst to be.
 If eyes, corrupt by over-partial looks,
 Be anchor'd in the bay where all men ride,
 Why of eyes' falsehood hast thou forged hooks,
 Whereto the judgment of my heart is tied ?
 Why should my heart think that a several plot,
 Which my heart knows the wide world's common place ?
 Or mine eyes, seeing this, say this is not,
 To put fair truth upon so foul a face ?

In things right true my heart and eyes have err'd,
And to this false plague are they now transferr'd.

CXXXVIII.

When my love swears that she is made of truth,
I do believe her, though I know she lies ;
That she might think me some untutor'd youth,
Unlearned in the world's false subtilties.
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Although she knows my days are past the best,
Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue ;
On both sides thus is simple truth suppress'd.
But wherefore says she not she is unjust ?
And wherefore say not I that I am old ?
O, love's best habit is in seeming trust,
And age in love loves not to have years told :
Therefore I lie with her, and she with me,
And in our faults by lies we flatter'd be.

CXXXIX.

O, call not me to justify the wrong
That thy unkindness lays upon my heart ;
Wound me not with thine eye, but with thy tongue ;
Use power with power, and slay me not by art.
Tell me thou lov'st elsewhere ; but in my sight,
Dear heart, forbear to glance thine eye aside.
What need'st thou wound with cunning, when thy might
Is more than my o'erpress'd defence can 'bide ?
Let me excuse thee : ah ! my love well knows
Her pretty looks have been mine enemies ;
And therefore from my face she turns my foes,
That they elsewhere might dart their injuries :
Yet do not so ; but since I am near slain,
Kill me outright with looks, and rid my pain.

CXL.

Be wise as thou art cruel ; do not press
My tongue-tied patience with too much disdain ;

Lest sorrow lend me words, and words express
 The manner of my pity-wanting pain.
 If I might teach thee wit, better it were,
 Though not to love, yet, love, to tell me so ;
 (As testy sick men, when their deaths be near,
 No news but health from their physicians know ;)
 For, if I should despair, I should grow mad,
 And in my madness might speak ill of thee :
 Now this ill-wresting world is grown so bad,
 Mad slanderers by mad ears believed be.
 That I may not be so, nor thou belied,
 Bear thine eyes straight, though thy proud heart go
 wide.

CXL.

In faith I do not love thee with mine eyes,
 For they in thee a thousand errors note ;
 But 't is my heart that loves what they despise,
 Who in despite of view is pleas'd to dote.
 Nor are mine ears with thy tongue's tune delighted ;
 Nor tender feeling, to base touches prone,
 Nor taste nor smell, desire to be invited
 To any sensual feast with thee alone :
 But my five wits, nor my five senses can
 Dissuade one foolish heart from serving thee,
 Who leaves unsway'd the likeness of a man,
 Thy proud heart's slave and vassal wretch to be :
 Only my plague thus far I count my gain,
 That she that makes me sin, awards me pain.

CXLII.

Love is my sin, and thy dear virtue hate,
 Hate of my sin, grounded on sinful loving :
 O, but with mine compare thou thine own state,
 And thou shalt find it merits not reproving ;
 Or, if it do, not from those lips of thine,
 That have profan'd their scarlet ornaments,
 And seal'd false bonds of love as oft as mine ;
 Robb'd others' beds' revenues of their rents.

Be it lawful I love thee, as thou lov'st those
Whom thine eyes woo as mine importune thee :
Root pity in thy heart, that, when it grows,
Thy pity may deserve to pitied be.

If thou dost seek to have what thou dost hide,
By self-example mayst thou be denied !

CXLIII.

Lo, as a careful housewife runs to catch
One of her feather'd creatures broke away,
Sets down her babe, and makes all swift despatch
In pursuit of the thing she would have stay ;
Whilst her neglected child holds her in chace,
Cries to catch her whose busy care is bent
To follow that which flies before her face,
Not prizing her poor infant's discontent ;
So runn'st thou after that which flies from thee,
Whilst I thy babe chase thee afar behind ;
But if thou catch thy hope, turn back to me,
And play the mother's part, kiss me, be kind :
So will I pray that thou mayst have thy *Will*,
If thou turn back, and my loud crying still.

CXLIV.

Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
Which like two spirits do suggest^a me still ;
The better angel is a man right fair,
The worser spirit a woman, colour'd ill.
To win me soon to hell, my female evil
Tempteth my better angel from my side,
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
Wooing his purity with her foul pride.
And whether that my angel be turn'd fiend,
Suspect I may, yet not directly tell ;
But being both from me, both to each friend,
I guess one angel in another's hell.

^a *Suggest*—tempt.

Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,
Till my bad angel fire my good one out.

CXLV.

Those lips that Love's own hand did make
Breath'd forth the sound that said, "I hate,"
To me that languish'd for her sake :
But when she saw my woeful state,
Straight in her heart did mercy come,
Chiding that tongue, that ever sweet
Was used in giving gentle doom ;
And taught it thus anew to greet :
"I hate," she alter'd with an end,
That follow'd it as gentle day
Doth follow night, who like a fiend
From heaven to hell is flown away.
"I hate" from hate away she threw,
And sav'd my life, saying—"not you."

CXLVI. ♀

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
Fool'd by those rebel powers that thee array,
Why dost thou pine within, and suffer dearth,
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay ?
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend ?
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
Eat up thy charge ? Is this thy body's end ?
Then, soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
And let that pine to aggravate thy store ;
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross ;
Within be fed, without be rich no more :
So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,
And, Death, once dead, there 's no more dying then.

CXLVII.

My love is as a fever, longing still
For that which longer nurseth the disease ;

Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
 The uncertain sickly appetite to please.
 My reason, the physician to my love,
 Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,
 Hath left me, and I desperate now approve
 Desire is death, which physic did except.
 Past cure I am, now reason is past care,
 And frantic mad with evermore unrest;
 My thoughts and my discourse as mad men's are,
 At random from the truth vainly express'd;
 For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,
 Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.

CXLVIII.

O me! what eyes hath love put in my head,
 Which have no correspondence with true sight!
 O, if they have, where is my judgment fled,
 That censures^a falsely what they see aright?
 If that be fair whereon my false eyes dote,
 What means the world to say it is not so?
 If it be not, then love doth well denote
 Love's eye is not so true as all men's: no,
 How can it? O how can Love's eye be true,
 That is so vex'd with watching and with tears?
 No marvel then though I mistake my view;
 The sun itself sees not, till heaven clears.
 O cunning Love! with tears thou keep'st me blind,
 Lest eyes well-seeing thy foul faults should find.

CXLIX.

Canst thou, O cruel! say I love thee not,
 When I, against myself, with thee partake?^b
 Do I not think on thee, when I forgot
 Am of myself, all tyrant, for thy sake?

^a *Censures*—judges, estimates.

^b *Partake*—take part. A partaker was a confederate.

Who hateth thee that I do call my friend ?
 On whom frown'st thou that I do fawn upon ?
 Nay if thou low'r'st on me, do I not spend
 Revenge upon myself with present moan ?
 What merit do I in myself respect,
 That is so proud thy service to despise,
 When all my best doth worship thy defect,
 Commanded by the motion of thine eyes ?
 But, love, hate on, for now I know thy mind ;
 Those that can see thou lov'st, and I am blind.

C.L.

O, from what power hast thou this powerful might,
 With insufficiency my heart to sway ?
 To make me give the lie to my true sight,
 And swear that brightness doth not grace the day ?
 Whence hast thou this becoming of things ill,
 That in the very refuse of thy deeds
 There is such strength and warrant^{use} of skill,
 That, in my mind, thy worst all best exceeds ?
 Who taught thee how to make me love thee more,
 The more I hear and see just cause of hate ?
 O, though I love what others do abhor,
 With others thou shouldst not abhor my state ;
 If thy unworthiness rais'd love in me,
 More worthy I to be belov'd of thee.

C.L.I.

Love is too young to know what conscience is ;
 Yet who knows not, conscience is born of love ?
 Then, gentle cheater, urge not my amiss,^a
 Lest guilty of my faults thy sweet self prove.
 For thou betraying me, I do betray
 My nobler part to my gross body's treason ;

^a Amis—fault.

My soul doth tell my body that he may
Triumph in love ; flesh stays no farther reason ;
But, rising at thy name, doth point out thee
As his triumphant prize. Proud of this pride,
He is contented thy poor drudge to be,
To stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side.

No want of conscience hold it that I call
Her—love, for whose dear love I rise and fall.

CLII.

In loving thee thou know'st I am forsworn,
But thou art twice forsworn, to me love swearing ;
In act thy bed-vow broke, and new faith torn,
In vowing new hate after new love bearing.
But why of two oaths' breach do I accuse thee,
When I break twenty ? I am perjur'd most ;
For all my vows are oaths but to misuse thee,
And all my honest faith in thee is lost :
For I have sworn deep oaths of thy deep kindness,
Oaths of thy love, thy truth, thy constancy ;
And, to enlighten thee, gave eyes to blindness,
Or made them swear against the thing they see ;
For I have sworn thee fair : more perjur'd I,
To swear, against the truth, so foul a lie !

CLIII.

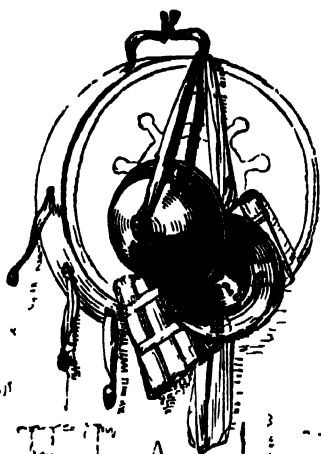
Cupid laid by his brand, and fell asleep :
A maid of Dian's this advantage found,
And his love-kindling fire did quickly steep
In a cold valley-fountain of that ground ;
Which borrow'd from this holy fire of love
A dateless lively heat, still to endure,
And grew a seething bath, which yet men prove
Against strange maladies a sovereign cure.
But at my mistress' eye Love's brand new-fir'd,
The boy for trial needs would touch my breast ;

I, sick withal, the help of bath desir'd,
And thither hied, a sad distemper'd guest,
But found no cure: the bath for my help lies
Where Cupid got new fire,—my mistress' eyes.

CLIV.

The little love-god, lying once asleep,
Laid by his side his heart-inflaming brand,
Whilst many nymphs that vow'd chaste life to keep
Came tripping by; but in her maiden hand
The fairest votary took up that fire
Which many legions of true hearts had warm'd;
And so the general of hot desire
Was sleeping by a virgin hand disarm'd.
This brand she quenched in a cool well by,
Which from Love's fire took heat perpetual,
Growing a bath and healthful remedy
For men diseas'd; but I, my mistress' thrall,
Came there for cure, and this by that I prove,
Love's fire heats water, water cools not love.

END OF THE SONNETS.



SOVER'S COMPLAINS
THE
PASSIONATE
PILGRIM



A LOVER'S COMPLAINT.

FROM off a hill whose concave womb re-worded ^a
 A plaintful story from a sistering vale,
 My spirits to attend this double voice accorded,
 And down I laid^b to list the sad-tun'd tale :
 Ere long espied a fickle maid full pale,
 Tearing of papers, breaking rings a-twain,
 Storming her world with sorrow's wind and rain.

Upon her head a platted hive of straw,
 Which fortified her visage from the sun,
 Whereon the thought might think sometime it saw
 The carcase of a beauty spent and done.
 Time had not scythed all that youth begun,
 Nor youth all quit : but, spite of Heaven's fell rage,
 Some beauty peep'd through lattice of sear'd age.

Oft did she heave her napkin^c to her eyne,
 Which on it had conceited characters,^d
 Laund'ring^e the silken figures in the brine
 That season'd woe had pelleted^f in tears,
 And often reading what contents it bears ;
 As often shrieking undistinguish'd woe,
 In clamours of all size, both high and low.

^a *Re-worded*—echoed.

^b *Laid*. So the original. But it is usually more correctly printed *lay*. The idiomatic grammar of Shakspeare's age ought not to be removed.

^c *Napkin*—handkerchief.

^d *Conceited characters*—fanciful figures worked on the handkerchief.

^e *Laund'ring*—washing.

^f *Pelleted*—formed into pellets, or small balls.

Sometimes her levell'd eyes their carriage ride,
 As they did battery to the spheres intend;
 Sometime diverted their poor balls are tied
 To th' orb'd earth: sometimes they do extend
 Their view right on; anon their gazes lend
 To every place at once, and nowhere fix'd,
 The mind and sight distractedly commix'd.

Her hair, nor loose, nor tied in formal plat,
 Proclaim'd in her a careless hand of pride;
 For some, untuck'd, descended her sheav'd^a hat,
 Hanging her pale and pined cheek beside;
 Some in her threaden fillet still did bide,
 And, true to bondage, would not break from thence,
 Though slackly braided in loose negligence.

A thousand favours from a maund^b she drew
 Of amber, crystal, and of bedded jet,^c
 Which one by one she in a river threw,
 Upon whose weeping margent she was set;
 Like usury, applying wet to wet,
 Or monarch's hands, that let not bounty fall
 Where want cries "some," but where excess begs all.

Of folded schedules had she many a one,
 Which she perus'd, sigh'd, tore, and gave the flood;
 Crack'd many a ring of posied gold and bone,
 Bidding them find their sepulchres in mud;
 Found yet mo^d letters sadly penn'd in blood,
 With sleided silk^e feat and affectedly
 Enswarth'd, and seal'd to curious secresy.

^a *Sheav'd*—made of straw, collected from sheaves.

^b *Maund*—a basket.

^c *Bedded*. So the original, the word probably meaning jet imbedded, or set, in some other substance.

^d *Mo*—more.

^e *Sleided silk*. In Mr. Ramsay's Introduction to his edition of the Paston Letters, the old mode of sealing a letter is clearly described—"It was carefully folded, and fastened at the end

These often bath'd she in her fluxive eyes,
And often kiss'd, and often gave ^a to tear;
Cried, "O false blood! thou register of lies,
What unapproved witness dost thou bear!
Ink would have seem'd more black and damned
here!"

This said, in top of rage the lines she rents,
Big discontent so breaking their contents.

A reverend man that graz'd his cattle nigh,
Sometime a blusterer, that the ruffle knew
Of court, of city, and had let go by
The swiftest hours, observed as they flew,
Towards this afflicted fancy ^b fastly drew;
And privileg'd by age, desires to know
In brief the grounds and motives of her woe.

So slides he down upon his grained bat,^c
And comely-distant sits he by her side;
When he again desires her, being sat,
Her grievance with his hearing to divide:
If that from him there may be aught applied
Which may her suffering ecstasy assuage,
'T is promis'd in the charity of age.

"Father," she says, "though in me you behold
The injury of many a blasting hour,
Let it not tell your judgment I am old;
Not age, but sorrow, over me hath power:
I might as yet have been a spreading flower,

by a sort of paper strap, upon which the seal was affixed; and under the seal ⁿ string, a silk thread, or even a straw, was frequently placed running around the letter."

^a *Gave* is here used in the sense of gave the mind to, contemplated, made a movement towards, inclined to.

^b *Fancy* is often used by Shakspeare in the sense of *love*; but here it means one that is possessed by fancy.

^c *Bat*—club.

Fresh to myself, if I had self-applied
Love to myself, and to no love beside.

" But woe is me ! too early I attended
A youthful suit (it was to gain my grace)
Of one by nature's outwards so commended,
That maiden's eyes stuck over all his face :
Love lack'd a dwelling, and made him her place :
And when in his fair parts she did abide,
She was new lodg'd, and newly deified.

" His brown locks did hang in crooked curls ;
And every light occasion of the wind
Upon his lips their silken parcels hurls.
What 's sweet to do, to do will aptly find :
Each eye that saw him did enchant the mind ;
For on his visage was in little drawn,
What largeness thinks in paradise was sawn.^a

" Small show of man was yet upon his chin ;
His phoenix down began but to appear,
Like unshorn velvet, on that termless skin,
Whose bare out-bragg'd the web it seem'd to wear ;
Yet show'd his visage^b by that cost more dear ;
And nice affections wavering stood in doubt
If best 't were as it was, or best without.

" His qualities were beauteous as his form,
For maiden-tongued he was, and thereof free ;
Yet, if men mov'd him, was he such a storm
As oft 'twixt May and April is to see,
When winds breathe sweet, unruly though they be.
His rudeness so with his authoriz'd youth
Did livery falseness in a pride of truth.

^a *Sawn*. Boswell says that the word means *sown*, and that it is still so pronounced in Scotland.

^b *Visage* is the inverted nominative case to *showed*.

" Well could he ride, and often men would say
That horse his mettle from his rider takes :
Proud of subjection, noble by the sway,
What rounds, what bounds, what course, what stop he
makes !

And controversy hence a question takes,
Whether the horse by him became his deed,
Or he his manage by the well-doing steed.

" But quickly on this side the verdict went ;
His real habitude gave life and grace
To appertainings and to ornament,
Accomplish'd in himself, not in his case :^a
All aids, themselves made fairer by their place,
Can, for additions ; yet their purpos'd trim
Piec'd not his grace, but were all grac'd by him.

" So on the tip of his subduing tongue
All kind of arguments and question deep,
All replication prompt, and reason strong,
For his advantage still did wake and sleep :
To make the weeper laugh, the laughter weep,
He had the dialect and different skill,
Catching all passions in his craft of will ;

" That he did in the general bosom reign
Of young, of old ; and sexes both enchanted,
To dwell with him in thoughts, or to remain
In personal duty, following where he haunted :
Consents bewitch'd, ere he desire, have granted ;
And dialogued for him what he would say,
Ask'd their own wills, and made their wills obey.

^a *Case*—outward show.

^b *Can* is constantly used by the old writers, especially by Spenser, in the sense of *began*. *For* is used in the sense of *as*.

" Many there were that did his picture get,
To serve their eyes, and in it put their mind ;
Like fools that in the imagination set
The goodly objects which abroad they find
Of lands and mansions, theirs in thought assign'd ;
And labouring in mo pleasures to bestow them,
Than the true gouty landlord which doth owe them :

" So many have, that never touch'd his hand,
Sweetly suppos'd them mistress of his heart.
My woeful self, that did in freedom stand,
And was my own fee-simple, (not in part,)
What with his art in youth, and youth in art,
Threw my affections in his charmed power,
Reserv'd the stalk, and gave him all my flower.

" Yet did I not, as some my equals did,
Demand of him, nor being desired yielded ;
Finding myself in honour so forbid, ~~as~~
With safest distance I mine honour shielded :
Experience for me many bulwarks builded
Of proofs new-bleeding, which remain'd the foil
Of this false jewel, and his amorous spoil.

" But ah ! who ever shunn'd by precedent
The destin'd ill she must herself assay ?
Or forc'd examples, 'gainst her own content,
To put the by-pass'd perils in her way ?
Counsel may stop a while what will not stay ;
For when we rage, advice is often seen
By blunting us to make our wits more keen.

" Nor gives it satisfaction to our blood,
That we must curb it upon others' proof,
To be forbid the sweets that seem so good,
For fear of harms that preach in our behoof.
O appetite, from judgment stand aloof !

The one a palate hath that needs will taste,
Though reason weep, and cry It is thy last.

" For further I could say, This man 's untrue,
And knew the patterns of his foul beguiling ;
Heard where his plants in others' orchards grew,
Saw how deceits were gilded in his smiling ;
Knew vows were ever brokers to defiling ;
Thought^a characters and words, merely but art,
And bastards of his foul adulterate heart.

" And long upon these terms I held my city,
Till thus he 'gan besiege me : Gentle maid,
Have of my suffering youth some feeling pity,
And be not of my holy vows afraid :
That 's to you sworn, to none was ever said ;
For feasts of love I have been call'd unto,
Till now did ne'er invite, nor never vow.

" All my offences that abroad you see
Are errors of the blood, none of the mind ;
Love made them not ; with acture^b they may be,
Where neither party is nor true nor kind :
They sought their shame that so their shame did find ;
And so much less of shame in me remains,
By how much of me their reproach contains.

" Among the many that mine eyes have seen,
Not one whose flame my heart so much as warm'd,
Or my affection put to the smallest teen,^c
Or any of my pleasures ever charm'd :
Harm have I done to them, but ne'er was harm'd ;

^a Malone—and he is followed in all modern editions—puts a comma after *thought*, and says, " it is here, I believe, a substantive " Surely *thought* is a verb. We have a regular sequence of verbs—heard—saw—knew—thought.

^b *Acture* is explained as synonymous with *action*.

^c *Teen*—grief.

Kept hearts in liveries, but mine own was free,
And reign'd, commanding in his monarchy.

" Look here what tributes wounded fancies sent me,
Of paled pearls, and rubies red as blood ;
Figuring that they their passions likewise lent me
Of grief and blushes, aptly understood
In bloodless white and the encrimson'd mood ;
Effects of terror and dear modesty,
Encamp'd in hearts, but fighting outwardly.

" And lo ! behold these talents^a of their hair,
With twisted metal amorously impleach'd,^b
I have receiv'd from many a several fair,
(Their kind acceptance weepingly beseech'd,)
With the annexions of fair gems enrich'd,
And deep-brain'd sonnets that did amplify
Each stone's dear nature, worth, and quality.

" The diamond, why 't was beautiful^a and hard,
Whereto his invis'd^c properties did tend ;
The deep-green emerald, in whose fresh regard
Weak sights their sickly radiance do amend ;
The heaven-hued sapphire and the opal blend
With objects manifold ; each several stone,
With wit well blazon'd, smil'd or made some moan.

" Lo ! all these trophies of affections hot,
Of pensiv'd and subdued desires the tender,
Nature hath charg'd me that I hoard them not,
But yield them up where I myself must render,
That is, to you, my origin and ender :
For these, of force, must your oblations be,
Since I their altar, you eupatron me.

^a *Talents* is here used in the sense of something precious.

^b *Impleach'd*—interwoven.

^c *Invis'd*—invisible.

" O then advance of yours that phraseless hand,
 Whose white weighs down the airy scale of praise,
 Take all these similes to your own command,
 Hallow'd with sighs that burning lungs did raise;
 What me your minister, for you obeys,
 Works under you; and to your audit comes
 Their distract parcels in combined sums.

" Lo! this device was sent me from a nun,
 Or sister sanctified of holiest note;
 Which late her noble suit^a in court did shun,
 Whose rarest havings^b made the blossoms^c dote;
 For she was sought by spirits of richest coat,^d
 But kept cold distance, and did thence remove,
 To spend her living in eternal love.

" But O, my sweet, what labour is 't to leave
 The thing we have not, mastering what not strives?
 Paling the place which did no form receive,
 Playing patient sports in unconstrained gyves:
 She that her fame so to herself contrives,
 The scars of battle 'scapeth by the flight,
 And makes her absence valiant, not her might.

" O pardon me, in that my boast is true;
 The accident which brought me to her eye,
 Upon the moment did her force subdue,
 And now she would the caged cloister fly:
 Religious love put out religion's eye:
 Not to be tempted, would she be immur'd,
 And now, to tempt all, liberty procur'd.

^a *Suit*. "The noble suit in court" is, we think, the suit made to her in court.

^b *Havings*. Malone receives this as *accomplishments*—Mr. Dyce as *fortune*.

^c *Blossoms*—young men; the flower of the nobility.

^d *Of richest coat*—of highest descent.

"How mighty then you are, O hear me tell!
The broken bosoms that to me belong
Have emptied all their fountains in my well,
And mine I pour your ocean all among:
I strong o'er them, and you o'er me being strong,
Must for your victory us all congeal,
As compound love to physic your cold breast.

"My parts had power to charm a sacred sun,
Who, disciplin'd and dieted in grace,
Believ'd her eyes when they to assail begun,
All vows and consecrations giving place.
O most potential love! vow, bond, nor space,
In thee hath neither sting, knot, nor confine,
For thou art all, and all things else are thine.

"When thou impresses, what are precepts worth
Of stale example? When thou wilt inflame,
How coldly those impediments stand forth
Of wealth, of filial fear, law, kindred; fame!
Love's arms are peace, 'gainst rule, 'gainst sense, 'gainst
shame,
And sweetens, in the suffering pangs it bears,
The aloes of all forces, shocks, and fears.

"Now all these hearts that do on mine depend,
Feeling it break, with bleeding groans they pine,
And supplicant their sighs to you extend,
To leave the battery that you make 'gainst mine,
Lending soft audience to my sweet design,
And credent soul to that strong-bonded oath,
That shall prefer and undertake my troth.

"This said, his watery eyes he did dismount,
Whose sights till then were levell'd on my face;
Each cheek a river running from a fount
With brinish current downward flow'd apace:
O how the channel to the stream gave grace!

Who, glaz'd with crystal, gate^a the glowing roses
That flame through water which their hue encloses.

" O father, what a hell of witchcraft lies
In the small orb of one particular tear!
But with the inundation of the eyes
What rocky heart to water will not wear?
What breast so cold that is not warmed here?
O cleft effect! cold modesty, hot wrath,
Both fire from hence and chill extincture hath!

" For lo! his passion, but an art of craft,
Even there resolv'd my reason into tears;
There my white stole of chastity I daff'd,
Shook off my sober guards, and civil^b fears;
Appear to him, as he to me appears,
All melting; though our drops this difference bore,
His poison'd me, and mine did him restore.

" In him a plenitude of subtle matter,
Applied to cautels,^c all strange forms receives,
Of burning blushes, or of weeping water,
Or swooning paleness; and he takes and leaves,
In either's aptness, as it best deceives,
To blush at speeches rank, to weep at woes,
Or to turn white and swoon at tragic shows;

" That not a heart which in his level came
Could scape the hail of his all-hurting aim,
Showing fair nature is both kind and tame;
And veil'd in them, did win whom he would maim:
Against the thing he sought he would exclaim;
When he most burn'd in heart-wish'd luxury,
He preach'd pure maid, and prais'd cold chastity.

^a Gate—got, procured.

^b Civil—decorous.

^c Cautels—deceitful purposes.

" Thus merely with the garment of a Grace
The naked and concealed fiend he cover'd,
That the unexperienc'd gave the tempter place,
Which, like a cherubin, above them hover'd.
Who, young and simple, would not be so lover'd ?
Ah me ! I fell ; and yet do question make
What I should do again for such a sake.

" O, that infected moisture of his eye,
O, that false fire which in his cheek so glow'd,
O, that forc'd thunder from his heart did fly,
O, that sad breath his spongy lungs bestow'd,
O, all that borrow'd motion, seeming ow'd,^a
Would yet again betray the fore-betray'd,
And new pervert a reconciled maid !"

^a *Ow'd*—owned ; his own.

END OF A LOVER'S COMPLAINT.

THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM.

I.

DID not the heavenly rhetoric of thine eye,
 'Gainst whom the world could not hold argument,
 Persuade my heart to this false perjury?
 Vows for thee broke deserve not punishment.
 A woman I forswore; but I will prove,
 Thou being a goddess, I forswore not thee:
 My vow was earthly, thou a heavenly love;
 Thy grace being gain'd cures all disgrace in me.
 My vow was breath, and breath a vapour is;
 Then, thou fair sun, that on this earth doth shine,
 Exhale this vapour vow; in thee it is:
 If broken, then it is no fault of mine.
 If by me broke, what fool is not so wise
 To lose an oath, to win a paradise?^a

II.

Sweet Cytherea, sitting by a brook,
 With young Adonis, lovely, fresh, and green,
 Did court the lad with many a lovely look,
 Such looks as none could look but beauty's queen.
 She told him stories to delight his ear;
 She show'd him favours to allure his eye;
 To win his heart, she touch'd him here and there:
 Touches so soft still conquer chastity.

^a The foregoing Sonnet appears, with some variations, in 'Love's Labour's Lost,' the first edition of which was printed in 1598.

But whether unripe years did want conceit,
 Or he refus'd to take her figur'd proffer,
 The tender nibbler would not touch the bait,
 But smile and jest at every gentle offer :
 Then fell she on her back, fair queen, and toward ;
 He rose and ran away ; ah, fool too floward !

III.

If love make me forsworn, how shall I swear to love ?
 O never faith could hold, if not to beauty vow'd :
 Though to myself forsworn, to thee I'll constant prove ;
 Those thoughts, to me like oaks, to thee like osiers
 bow'd.

Study his bias leaves, and makes his book thine eyes,
 Where all those pleasures live that art can comprehend.
 If knowledge be the mark, to know thee shall suffice ;
 Well learned is that tongue that well can thee com-
 mend ;

All ignorant that soul that sees thee without wonder ;
 Which is to me some praise, that I thy parts admire :
 Thine eye Jove's lightning seems, thy voice his dreadful
 thunder,

Which (not to anger bent) is music and sweet fire.
 Celestial as thou art, O do not love that wrong,
 To sing the heavens' praise with such an earthly
 tongue.^a

IV.

Scarce had the sun dried up the dewy morn,
 And scarce the herd gone to the hedge for shade.
 When Cytherea, all in love forlorn,
 A longing trar'iance for Adonis made,
 Under an osier growing by a brook,
 A brook where Adon used to cool his spleen.

^a This Sonnet also occurs in 'Love's Labour's Lost,' in which copy there are variations in several lines.

Hot was the day ; she hotter that did look
For his approach, that often there had been.
Anon he comes, and throws his mantle by,
And stood stark naked on the brook's green brim ;
The sun look'd on the world with glorious eye,
Yet not so wistly as this queen on him :
He, spying her, bounc'd in, whereas he stood ;
O Jove, quoth she, why was not I a flood ?

V.

Fair is my love, but not so fair as fickle ;
Mild as a dove, but neither true nor trusty ;
Brighter than glass, and yet, as glass is, brittle ;
Softer than wax, and yet, as iron, rusty :
A lily pale, with damask die to grace her,
None fairer, nor none falsier to deface her.

Her lips to mine how often hath she join'd,
Between each kiss her oaths of true love swearing !
How many tales to please me hath she coin'd,
Dreading my love, the loss thereof still fearing !
Yet in the midst of all her pure protestings,
Her faith, her oaths, her tears, and all were jestings.

She burn'd with love, as straw with fire flameth,
She burn'd out love, as soon as straw out burneth ;
She fram'd the love, and yet she foil'd the framing,
She had love last, and yet she fell a turning.
Was this a lover, or a lecher whether ?
Bad in the best, though excellent in neither.

VI.

If music and sweet poetry agree,
As they must needs, the sister and the brother,
Then must the love be great 'twixt thee and me,
Because thou lov'st the one, and I the other.

Dowland to thee is dear, whose heavenly touch
 Upon the lute doth ravish human sense;
 Spenser to me, whose deep conceit is such,
 As, passing all conceit, needs no defence.
 Thou lov'st to hear the sweet melodious sound
 That Phœbus' lute, the queen of music, makes:
 And I in deep delight am chiefly drown'd,
 Whenas himself to singing he betakes.
 One god is god of both, as poets feign;
 One knight loves both, and both in thee remain.

VII.

Fair was the morn, when the fair queen of love,^a

* * * * *

Paler for sorrow than her milk-white dove,
 For Adon's sake, a youngster proud and wild;
 Her stand she takes upon a steep-up hill:
 Anon Adonis comes with horn and hounds;
 She, silly queen, with more than love's good will,
 Forbade the boy he should not pass those grounds;
 Once, quoth she, did I see a fair sweet youth
 Here in these brakes deep-wounded with a boar,
 Deep in the thigh, a spectacle of ruth!
 See in my thigh, quoth she, here was the sore:
 She showed hers; he saw more wounds than one,
 And blushing fled, and left her all alone.

VIII.

Sweet rose, fair flower, untimely pluck'd, soon vaded,^b
 Pluck'd in the bud, and vaded in the spring!
 Bright orient pearl, alack! too timely shaded!
 For creature, kill'd too soon by death's sharp sting!
 Like a green plum that hangs upon a tree,
 And falls, through wind, before the fall should be.

^a The second line is lost.

^b *Vaded*—faded.

I weep for thee, and yet no cause I have;
 For why? thou left'st me nothing in thy will.
 And yet thou left'st me more than I did crave;
 For why? I craved nothing of thee still:
 O yes, dear friend, I pardon crave of thee;
 Thy discontent thou didst bequeath to me.

IX.

Venus, with Adonis^a sitting by her,
 Under a myrtle shade, began to woo him:
 She told the youngling how god Mars did try her,
 And as he fell to her, she fell to him.
 Even thus, quoth she, the warlike god embrac'd me;
 And then she clipp'd Adonis in her arms:
 Even thus, quoth she, the warlike god unlac'd me;
 As if the boy should use like loving charms.
 Even thus, quoth she, he seized on my lips,
 And with her lips on his did act the seizure;
 And as she fetched breath, away he skips,
 And would not take her meaning nor her pleasure.
 Ah! that I had my lady at this bay,
 To kiss and clip me till I run away!

X.

Crabbed age and youth
 Cannot live together;
 Youth is full of pleasance,
 Age is full of care:
 Youth like summer morn,
 Age like winter weather;
 Youth like summer brave,
 Age like winter bare.
 Youth is full of sport,
 Age's breath is short;

^a This Sonnet is found in 'Fidessa,' by B. Griffin, 1596.
 There are great variations in that copy.

Youth is nimble, age is lame :
 Youth is hot and bold,
 Age is weak and cold ;
 Youth is wild, and age is tame.
 Age, I do abhor thee,
 Youth, I do adore thee ;
 O, my love, my love is young !
 Age, I do defy thee ;
 O sweet shepherd, hie thee,
 For methinks thou stay'st too long.

XI.

Beauty is but a vain and doubtful good,
 A shining gloss, that vadeth suddenly ;
 A flower that dies, when first it 'gins to bud ;
 A brittle glass, that 's broken presently :
 A doubtful good, a gloss, a glass, a flower,
 Lost, vaded, broken, dead within an hour.

And as goods lost are seld or never found,
 As vaded gloss no rubbing will refresh,
 As flowers dead lie wither'd on the ground,
 As broken glass no cement can redress,^a
 So beauty, blemish'd once, for ever 's lost,
 In spite of physick, painting, pain, and cost.

XII.

Good night, good rest. Ah ! neither be my share :
 She bade good night, that kept my rest away ;
 And daff'd me to a cabin hang'd with care,
 To descant on the doubts of my decay.

^a In the twenty-ninth volume of the ' Gentleman's Magazine, a copy of this poem is given, as from an ancient manuscript, in which there are the following variations :—

“ And as goods lost are seld or never found,
 As faded gloss no rubbing will *erquite*,
 As flowers dead lie wither'd on the ground,
 As broken glass no cement can *unite*.”

Farewell, quoth she, and come again to-morrow ;
 Fare well I could not, for I supp'd with sorrow.

Yet at my parting sweetly did she smile,
 In scorn or friendship, nill I construe whether :
 'T may be, she joy'd to jest at my exile,
 'T may be, again to make me wander thither :
Wander, a word for shadows like myself,
 As take the pain, but cannot pluck the pelf.

XIII.

Lord, how mine eyes throw gazes to the east !
 My heart doth charge the watch ; the morning rise
 Doth cite each moving sense from idle rest.
 Not daring trust the office of mine eyes,
 While Philomela sits and sings, I sit and mark,
 And wish her lays were tuned like the lark ;

For she doth welcome daylight with her ditty,
 And dives away dark dismal-dreaming night :
 The night so pack'd, I post unto my pretty ;
 Heart hath his hope, and eyes their wished sight ;
 Sorrow chang'd to solace, solace mix'd with sorrow ;
 For why ? she sigh'd, and bade me come to-morrow.

Were I with her, the night would post too soon ;
 But now are minutes added to the hours ;
 To spite me now, each minute seems a moon ;^a
 Yet not for me, shine sun to succour flowers !
 Pack night, peep day ; good day, of night now
 borrow ;
 Short, night, to-night, and length thyself to-morrow.

^a *moon*. The original has *an hour*—evidently a misprint.
 The emendation of *moon*, in the sense of *month*, is by Steevens,
 and it ought to atone for some faults of the commentator

SONNETS
TO
SUNDRY NOTES OF MUSIC.

XIV.

It was a lordling's daughter, the fairest one of three,
That liked of her master as well as well might be,
Till looking on an Englishman, the fairest that eye
could see,

Her fancy fell a turning.

Long was the combat doubtful, that love with love did
fight,

To leave the master loveless, or kill the gallant knight :
To put in practice either, alas it was a spite

Unto the silly damsel.

But one must be refused, more mickle was the pain,
That nothing could be used, to turn them both to gain,
For of the two the trusty knight was wounded with
disdain :

Alas, she could not help it !

Thus art, with arms contending, was victor of the day,
Which by a gift of learning did bear the maid away ;
Then lullaby, the learned man hath got the lady gay ;
For now my song is ended.

XV.

On a day (alack the day !),
Love, whose month was ever May,
Spied a blossom passing fair,
Playing in the wanton air :
'Through the velvet leaves the wind,
All unseen, 'gan passage find ;
That the lover, sick to death,
Wish'd himself the heaven's breath.

Air, quoth he, thy cheeks may blow;
 Air, would I might triumph so!
 But, alas, my hand hath sworn
 Ne'er to pluck thee from thy thorn:
 Vow, alack, for youth unmeet,
 Youth, so apt to pluck a sweet.
 Thou for whom Jove would swear
 Juno but an Ethiop were;
 And deny himself for Jove,
 Tuning mortal for thy love.^a

XVI.

My flocks feed not,
 My ewes breed not,
 My rams speed not,
 All is amiss:
 Love is dying,
 Faith 's defying,
 Heart 's denying,
 Causer of this.^b
 All my merry jigs are quite forgot,
 All my lady's love is lost, God wot:
 Where her faith was firmly fix'd in love,
 There a nay is plac'd without remove.
 One silly cross
 Wrought all my loss;
 O frowning Fortune, cursed, fickle dame!
 For now I see,
 Inconstancy
 More in women than in men remain.

^a This beautiful little poem also occurs, with variations, in 'Love's Labour's Lost.'

^b We have two other ancient copies of this poem—one in 'England's Helicon,' 1600; the other in a collection of Madrigals by Thomas Weelkes, 1597.

In black mourn I,
 All fears scorn I,
 Love hath forlorn me,

Living in thrall :

Heart is bleeding,
 All help needing,
 (O cruel speeding !)

Fraughted with gall.

My shepherd's pipe can sound no deal,^a
 My wether's bell rings doleful knell ;
 My curtail dog, that wont to have play'd,
 Plays not at all, but seems afraid ;
 With sighs so deep,
 Procures^b to weep,

In howling wise, to see my doleful plight.

How sighs resound
 Through heartless ground,

Like a thousand vanquish'd men in bloody fight !

Clear wells spring not,
 Sweet birds sing not,
 Green plants bring not

Forth ; they die :

Herds stand weeping,
 Flocks all sleeping,
 Nymphs back peeping

Fearfully.

All our pleasure known to us poor swains,
 All our merry meetings on the plains,
 All our evening sport from us is fled,
 All our love is lost, for love is dead.
 Farewell, sweet lass,
 Thy like ne'er was

^a *No deal*—in no degree : *some deal* and *no deal* were common expressions

^b *Procures*. 'The curtail dog is the nominative case to this verb.

For a sweet content, the cause of all my moan :
Poor Coridon
Must live alone,
Other help for him I see that there is none.

XVII.

Whenas thine eye hath chose the dame,
And stall'd the deer that thou shouldst strike,
Let reason rule things worthy blame,
As well as fancy, partial might : ^a
Take counsel of some wiser head,
Neither too young, nor yet unwed.

And when thou com'st thy tale to tell,
Smooth not thy tongue with filed talk,
Lest she some subtle practice smell ;
(A cripple soon can find a halt :)
But plainly say thou lov'st her well,
And set her person forth to sell.

What though her frowning brows be bent,
Her cloudy looks will calm ere night ;
And then too late she will repent,
That thus dissembled her delight ;
And twice desire, ere it be day,
That which with scorn she put away.

What though she strive to try her strength,
And ban and brawl, and say thee nay,
Her feeble force will yield at length,
When craft hath taught her thus to say :
" Had women been so strong as men,
In faith you had not had it then."

^a *Fancy* is here used as *lore*, and *might* as *power*. Steevens, mischievously we should imagine, changed *partial might* to *partial tike* ; and Malone adopts this reading, which makes Cupid a bull-dog.

And to her will frame all thy ways ;
 Spare not to spend,—and chiefly there
 Where thy desert may merit praise,
 By ringing in thy lady's ear :
 The strongest castle, tower, and town,
 The golden bullet beats it down.

Serve always with assured trust,
 And in thy suit be humble, true ;
 Unless thy lady prove unjust,
 Press never thou to choose anew :
 When time shall serve, be thou not slack .
 To proffer, though she put thee back.

The wiles and guiles that women work,
 Dissembled with an outward show,
 The tricks and toys that in them lurk,
 The cock that treads them shall not know.
 Have you not heard it said full oft,
 A woman's nay doth stand for nought ?

Think women still to strive with men,
 To sin, and never for to saint :
 There is no heaven, by holy then,
 When time with age shall them attain.
 Were kisses all the joys in bed,
 One woman would another wed.

But soft ; enough,—too much I fear,
 Lest that my mistress hear my song ;
 She 'll not stick to round me i' th' ear,
 To teach my tongue to be so long ;
 Yet will she blush, here be it said,
 To hear her secrets so bewray'd.

XVIII.

Live with me, and be my love,
 And we will all the pleasures prove

That hills and valleys, dales and fields,
And all the craggy mountains yields.

There will we sit upon the rocks,
And see the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers, by whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

There will I make thee a bed of roses,
With a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroider'd all with leaves of myrtle.

A belt of straw and ivy buds,
With coral clasps and amber studs;
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Then live with me and be my love.

LOVE'S ANSWER.

If that the world and love were young,
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,
These pretty pleasures might me move
To live with thee and be thy love.

XIX.^a

As it fell upon a day,
In the merry month of May,
Sitting in a pleasant shade
Which a grove of myrtles made,
Beasts did leap, and birds did sing,
Trees did grow, and plants did spring:
Everything did banish moan,
Save the nightingale alone:
She, poor bird, as all forlorn,
Lean'd her breast up-till a thorn,

^a This poem is also incompletely printed in 'Englan's Helicon'; where it bears the signature *Ignoto*.

And there sung the dolefull'st ditty,
That to hear it was great pity :
Fie, fie, fie, now would she cry,
Teru, Teru, hy and by :
That to hear her so complain,
Scarce I could from tears refrain ;
For her griefs so lively shown,
Made me think upon mine own.
Ah ! thought I, thou mourn'st in vain ;
None take pity on thy pain :
Senseless trees, they cannot hear thee ;
Ruthless bears, they will not cheer thee.
King Pandion, he is dead ;
All thy friends are lapp'd in lead :
All thy fellow-birds do sing,
Careless of thy sorrowing.
Even so, poor lird, like thee,
None alive will pity me. ♀
Whilst as fickle Fortune smil'd,
Thou and I were both beguil'd.
Every one that flatters thee
Is no friend in misery.
Words are easy like the wind ;
Faithful friends are hard to find.
Every man will be thy friend,
Whilst thou hast wherewith to spend ;
But if store of crowns be scant,
No man will supply thy want.
If that one be prodigal,
Bountiful they will him call :
And with such-like flattering,
" Pity but he were a king."
If he be addict to vice,
Quickly him they will entice ;
If to women he be bent,
They have him at commandement ;
But if fortune once do frown,
Then farewell his great renown ;

They that fawn'd on him before,
Use his company no more.
He that is thy friend indeed,
He will help thee in thy need ;
If thou sorrow, he will weep ;
If thou wake, he cannot sleep :
Thus of every grief in heart
He with thee doth bear a part.
These are certain signs to know
Faithful friend from flattering foe.

S O N G.

Take, oh, take those lips away,
That so sweetly were forsworn,
And those eyes, the break of day,
Lights that do mislead the morn :
But my kisses bring again,
Seals of love, but seal'd in vain.

Hide, oh, hide those hills of snow,
Which thy frozen bosom bears,
On whose tops the pinks that grow
Are of those that April wears.
But first set my poor heart free,
Bound in those icy chains by thee.*

* The collection entitled 'The Passionate Pilgrim,' &c., ends with the Sonnet to Sundry Notes of Music which we have numbered xix. Malone adds to the collection this exquisite song, of which we find the first verse in 'Measure for Measure.'

VERSES AMONG THE ADDITIONAL POEMS
TO CHESTER'S LOVE'S MARTYR,

PRINTED IN 1601.

LET the bird of loudest lay,
On the sole Arabian tree,^a
Herald sad and trumpet be,
To whose sound chaste wings obey.

But thou, shrieking harbinger,
Foul pre-currer of the fiend,
Augur of the fever's end,
To this troop come thou not near.

From this session interdict
Every fowl of tyrant wing;^a
Save the eagle, feather'd king :
Keep the obsequy so strict.

Let the priest in surplice white,
That defunctive music can,^b
Be the death-divining swan,
Lest the requiem lack his right.

And thou, treble-dated crow
That thy sable gender mak'st
With the breath thou giv'st and tak'st,
'Mongst our mourners shalt thou go.

^a There is a curious coincidence in a passage in 'The Tempest':—

"Now I will believe
That there are unicorns; that in Arabia
There is one tree, the phoenix' throne."

^b Can—knows.

Here the anthem doth commence :
Love and constancy is dead ;
Phoenix and the turtle fled
In a mutual flame from hence.

So they lov'd, as love in twain
Had the essence but in one ;
Two distincts, division none :
Number there in love was slain.

Hearts remote, yet not asunder ;
Distance, and no space was seen
'Twixt the turtle and his queen :
But in them it were a wonder.

So between them love did shine,
That the turtle saw his right
Flaming in the phoenix' sight :
Either was the other's mine.

Property was thus appall'd,
That the self was not the same ;
Single nature's double name
Neither two nor one was call'd.

Reason, in itself confounded,
Saw division grow together ;
To themselves yet either-neither,
Simple were so well compounde ! :

That it cried how true a twain
Seemeth this concordant one !
Love hath reason, reason none,
If what parts can so remain.

Whereupon it made this threne^a
To the phoenix and the dove,
Co-supremes and stars of love ;
As chorus to their tragic scene.

^a *Threne*—funereal song.

THRENOS.

Beauty, truth, and rarity,
Grace in all simplicity,
Here enclos'd in cinders lie.

Death is now the phoenix' nest;
And the turtle's loyal breast
To eternity doth rest,

Leaving no posterity :—
'T was not their infirmity,
It was married chastity.

Truth may seem, but cannot be :
Beauty brag, but 't is not she ;
Truth and beauty buried be.

To this urn let those repair
That are either true or fair ;
For these dead birds sigh a prayer.

END OF VERSES.



[House in Henley-street, about 1820.]

FACTS
CONNECTED WITH THE
LIFE AND WRITINGS
OF
WILLIAM SHAKSPERE.

ABRIDGED
FROM 'WILLIAM SHAKSPERE, A BIOGRAPHY,'
BY THE AUTHOR.

THE
LIFE AND WRITINGS
OF
WILLIAM SHAKSPERE.

ON the 22nd of August, 1485, there was a battle fought for the crown of England, a short battle ending in a decisive victory. The battle-field was Bosworth. Was there in that victorious army of the Earl of Richmond an Englishman bearing the name of Chacksper, or Shakespeyre, or Schakespere, or Schakespeire, or Schakspere, or Shakespere, or Shaksperc,*—a martial name, however spelt? Of the warlike achievements of this Shaksperc there is no record: his name or his deeds would have no interest for us unless there had been born, eighty years after this battle-day, a direct descendant from him—

“ Whose muse, full of high thought's invention,
Doth like himself *heroically sound* ;” †—

* A list of the brethren and sisters of the Guild of Knowledge, near Rowington, in Warwickshire, exhibits a great number of the name of Shaksperc in that fraternity, from about 1460 to 1527; and the names are spelt with the diversity here given, *Shaksperc* being the latest.

† Spenser.

a Shakspeare, of whom it was also said—

“ He seems to *shake a lance*
As brandish'd at the eyes of ignorance.”*

A public document bearing the date of 1596 affirms of John Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, the father of William Shakspeare, that his “parent and late antecessors were, for their *valiant* and faithful services, advanced and rewarded of the most prudent prince King Henry VII. of famous memory;” and it adds, “sithence which time they have continued at those parts [Warwickshire] in good reputation and credit.” Another document of a similar character, bearing the date of 1599, also affirms upon “creditable report,” of “John Shakspeare, now of Stratford-upon-Avon, in the county of Warwick, gentleman,” that his “parent and great-grandfather, late antecessor, ^{for} his faithful and approved service to the late most prudent prince King Henry VII. of famous memory, was advanced and rewarded with lands and tenements, given to him in those parts of Warwickshire, where they have continued by some descents in good reputation and credit.” Such are the recitals of two several grants of arms to John Shakspeare, confirming a previous grant made to him in 1569.

The great-grandson of the faithful and approved servant of Henry VII., John Shakspeare, was a burgess of the corporation of Stratford, and was in all probability born about 1530. The family had continued in those parts, “by some descents;” but how they were occupied in the business of life, what was their station

* Ben Jonson.

in society, how they branched out into other lines of Shaksperes, we have no record.

In 1599 John Shakspeare a second time went to the College of Arms, and, producing his own "ancient coat of arms," said that he had "married the daughter and one of the heirs of Robert Arden, of Wellincote:" and then the heralds' say—"We have likewise upon one other escutcheon impaled the same with the ancient arms of the said Arden of Wellincote." They add that John Shakspeare, and his children, issue, and posterity, may bear and use the same shield of arms, single or impaled.

The family of Arden was one of the highest antiquity in Warwickshire. Dugdale traces its pedigree uninterruptedly up to the time of Edward the Confessor. The pedigree which Dugdale gives of the Arden family brings us no nearer in the direct line to the mother of Shakspeare than to Robert Arden, her great-grandfather: he was the third son of Walter Arden, who married Eleanor the daughter of John Hampden, of Buckinghamshire; and he was brother to Sir John Arden, squire for the body to Henry VII. Robert's son, also called Robert, was groom of the chamber to Henry VII. He married, and he had a son, also Robert, who married Agnes Webbe. Their youngest daughter was Mary, the mother of William Shakspeare.

High as was her descent, wealthy and powerful as were the numerous branches of her family, Mary Arden, we doubt not, led a life of usefulness as well as innocence, within her native forest hamlet. She had three sisters, and they all, with their mother Agnes, survived their father, who died in December, 1556. His

will is dated the 24th of November in the same year, and the testator styles himself "Robert Arden, of Wylmcote, in the paryche of Aston Cauntlow." Mary, his youngest daughter, from superiority of mind, or some other cause of her father's confidence, occupies the most prominent position in the will. She has an undivided estate and a sum of money; and, from the crop being also bequeathed to her, it is evident that she was considered able to continue the tillage. The estate thus bequeathed to her consisted of about sixty acres of arable and pasture, and a house; and was called Asbies.

In the winter of 1556 was Mary Arden left without the guidance of a father, under this somewhat naked roof-tree, now become her own. Her sister Alice was to occupy another property in Wilmecote with her mother, provided the widow would ^{at} consent; and she did consent. And so she lived a somewhat lonely life, till a young yeoman of Stratford, who had probably some acquaintance with her father, came to sit oftener and oftener upon the wooden benches in the old hall—a substantial yeoman, a burgess of the corporation in 1557 or 1558; and then in due season Mary Arden and John Shakspeare were standing before the altar of the parish church of Aston Cantlow, and the house and lands of Asbies became administered by one who took possession "by the right of the said Mary," who thenceforward abided for half a century in the good town of Stratford.

There have been endless theories, old and new, affirmations, contradictions, as to the worldly calling of John Shakspeare. There are ancient registers in Stratford, minutes of the Common Hall, proceedings of

the Court-leet, ~~pleas~~ of the Court of Record, writs, which have been hunted over with untwearied diligence, and yet they tell us nothing, or next to nothing, of John Shakspeare. When he was elected an alderman in 1565, we can trace but the occupations of his brother aldermen, and readily come to the conclusion that the municipal authority of Stratford was vested, as we may naturally suppose it to have been, in the hands of substantial tradesmen, brewers, bakers, butchers, grocers, victuallers, mercers, woollen-drapers. Prying into the secrets of time, we are enabled to form some notion of the literary acquirements of this worshipful body. On rare, very rare occasions, the aldermen and burgesses constituting the town council affixed their signatures, for greater solemnity, to some order of the court; and on the 29th of September, in the seventh of Elizabeth, upon an order that John Wheler should take the office of bailiff, we have nineteen names subscribed, aldermen and burgesses. There is something in this document which suggests a motive higher than mere curiosity for calling up these dignitaries from their happy oblivion, saying to each, "Dost thou use to write thy name? or hast thou a mark to thyself like an honest plain-dealing man?" Alas! out of the nineteen seven only can answer, "I thank God I have been so well brought up that I can write my name." It is a matter of controversy whether John Shakspeare was one of the more clerkly corporators. We think he was; others believe he was not. In 1556, the year that Robert, the father of Mary Arden, died, John Shakspeare was admitted at the court-leet to two copyhold estates in Stratford.

The jurors of the leet present that George Turnor had alienated to John Shakspeare and his heirs one tenement, with a garden and croft, and other premises, in Grenehyl-street, held of the lord at an annual quit-rent; and John Shakspeare, who is present in court and does fealty, is admitted to the same. The same jurors present that Edward West has alienated to John Shakspeare one tenement and a garden adjacent in Henley Street, who is in the same way admitted, upon fealty done to the lord. Here then is John Shakspeare, before his marriage, the purchaser of two copyholds in Stratford, both with gardens, and one with a croft, or small enclosed field. In 1570 John Shakspeare is holding, as tenant under William Clopton, a meadow of fourteen acres, with its appurtenance, called Ingon, at the annual rent of eight pounds. This ~~rent~~, equivalent to at least forty pounds of our present money, would indicate that the appurtenance included a house,—and a very good house. This meadow of Ingon forms part of a large property known by that name near Clopton-house. When John Shakspeare married, the estate of Asbies, within a short ride of Stratford, came also into his possession. With these facts before us, scanty as they are, can we reasonably doubt that John Shakspeare was living upon his own land, renting the land of others, actively engaged in the business of cultivation, in an age when tillage was becoming rapidly profitable,—so much so that men of wealth very often thought it better to take the profits direct than to share them with the tenant?

And is all this, it may be said, of any importance in

looking at the life of William Shakspeare—a man who stands above all other individual men, above all ranks of men ; in comparison with whom, in his permanent influence upon mankind, generations of nobles, fighting men, statesmen, princes, are but as dust ? It is something, we think. It offers a better, because a more natural, explanation of the circumstances connected with the early life of the great poet than those stories which would make him of obscure birth and servile employments. Take old Aubrey's story, the shrewd learned gossip and antiquary, who survived Shakspeare some eighty years :—" Mr. William Shakspeare was born at Stratford-upon-Avon, in the county of Warwick. His father was a butcher, and I have been told heretofore by some of the neighbours that when he was a boy he exercised his father's trade ; but when he killed a calf he would do it in a high style, and make a speech. There was at that time another butcher's son in this town that was held not at all inferior to him for a natural wit, his acquaintance and coetanean, but died young." The story, however, has a variation. There was at Stratford, in the year 1693, a clerk of the parish church, eighty years old,—that is, he was three years old when William Shakspeare died,—and he, pointing to the monument of the poet, with the pithy remark that he was the " best of his family," proclaimed to a member of one of the Inns of Court that " this Shakspeare was formerly in this town bound apprentice to a butcher, but that he ran from his master to London." His father was a butcher, says Aubrey ; he was apprenticed to a butcher, says the parish clerk.

Akin to the butcher's trade is that of the dealer in wool. It is upon the authority of Betterton, the actor, who, in the beginning of the last century, made a journey into Warwickshire to collect anecdotes relating to Shakspeare, that Rowe tells us that John Shakspeare was a dealer in wool :—" His family, as appears by the register and public writings relating to that town, were of good figure and fashion there, and are mentioned as gentlemen. His father, who was a considerable dealer in wool, had so large a family, ten children in all, that, though he was his eldest son, he could give him no better education than his own employment." Tradition is here, we think, becoming a little more assimilated with the truth. The considerable dealer in wool might very well have been the landed proprietor, the cultivator, that we believe John Shakspeare to have been. Nor indeed was the incidental business even of a butcher, a slayer and seller of carcasses, incompatible with that occupation of a landholder. Harrison (1590), who mingles laments at the increasing luxury of the farmer with somewhat contradictory denouncements of the oppression of the tenant by the landlord, holds that the landlord is monopolising the tenant's profits :—" Most sorrowful of all to understand, that men of great port and countenance are so far from suffering their farmers to have any gain at all, that *they themselves become graziers, BUTCHERS, tanners, SHEEPMASTERS, woodmen, and denique quid non*, thereby to enrich themselves, and bring all the wealth of the country into their own hands, leaving the commonalty weak, or as an idol with broken or feeble arms, which may in time

of peace have a plausible show, but, when necessity shall enforce, have an heavy and bitter sequel." Has not Harrison solved the mystery of the butcher, and explained the tradition of the woolman?

There is an entry in the Bailiff's Court of Stratford, in 1555, which shows us one John Shakspeare, a glover. It does not follow that if this record be of the father of William Shakspeare, a young man in 1555, that he was always a glover. If he were a glover in 1555, he was subsequently a holder of land—a land proprietor.*

The Register of Baptisms of the parish of Stratford-upon-Avon shows that William, the son of John Shakspeare, was baptized on the 26th April, 1564. And when born? The want of such information is a defect in all parish-registers. Baptism so immediately followed birth in those times, when infancy was surrounded with greater dangers than in our own days of improved medical science, that we may believe that William Shakspeare first saw the light only a day or two previous to this legal record of his existence. There is no direct evidence that he was born on the 23rd of April, according to the common belief. But there was probably a tradition to that effect; for some years ago the Rev. Joseph Greene, a master of the grammar-school at Stratford, in an extract which he made from the Register of Shakspeare's baptism, wrote in the margin, "Born on the 23rd." We turn back to the first year of the registry, 1558, and we find the baptism of Joan, daughter to John Shakspeare, on the 15th of September. Again, in 1562, on the 2nd of December, Margaret, daughter to John Shakspeare, is

* See page 263.

baptized. In the entry of burials in 1563 we find, under date of April 30, that Margaret closed a short life in five months. We look forward, and in 1566 find the birth of another son registered:—Gilbert, son of John Shakspeare was baptized on the 13th of October of that year. In 1569 there is the registry of the baptism of a daughter, Joan, daughter of John Shakspeare, on the 15th of April. Thus, the registry of a second Joan leaves no reasonable doubt that the first died, and that a favourite name was preserved in the family. In 1571 another daughter was born,—Anne, daughter of Master John Shakspeare, baptized on the 28th of September. In 1574 another son was baptized, —Richard, son of Master John Shakspeare, on the 11th of March. The register of sorrow and blighted hope shows that Anne was buried on the 4th of April, 1579. The last entry, which determines the extent of John Shakspeare's family, is that of Edmund, son of Master John Shakspeare, baptized on the 3rd of May, 1580. Here, then, we find that two sisters of William were removed by death, probably before his birth. In two years and a half another son, Gilbert, came to be his playmate; and when he was five years old that most precious gift to a loving boy was granted, a sister, who grew up with him. Then came another sister, who faded untimely. When he was ten years old he had another brother to lead by the hand into the green meadows. When he was grown into youthful strength, a boy of sixteen, his youngest brother was born. William, Gilbert, Joan, Richard, Edmund, constituted the whole of the family amongst whom John Shakspeare was to share his means of existence. Rowe, we have already

seen, mentions the large family of John Shakspeare, "ten children in all." Malone has established very satisfactorily the origin of this error into which Rowe has fallen. In later years there was another John Shakspeare in Stratford. In the books of the corporation the name of John Shakspeare, shoemaker, can be traced in 1586; in the register in 1584 we find him married to Margery Roberts, who dies in 1587; he is, without doubt, married a second time, for in 1589, 1590, and 1591, Ursula, Humphrey, and Philip are born. It is unquestionable that these are not the children of the father of William Shakspeare, for they are entered in the register as the daughter, or sons, of John Shakspeare, without the style which our John Shakspeare always bore after 1569—"Magister." There can be no doubt that the mother of all the children of *Master* John Shakspeare was Mary Arden; for in proceedings in Chancery in 1597 it is set forth that John Shakspeare and his wife Mary, in the 20th Elizabeth, 1577, mortgaged her inheritance of Asbies. Nor can there be a doubt that the children born before 1569, when he is styled John Shakspeare, without the honourable addition of *Master*, were also *her* children; for in 1599, when *William* Shakspeare is an opulent man, application is made to the College of Arms, that John Shakspeare, and his issue and posterity, might use a "shield of arms," impaled with the arms of Shakspeare and Arden. This application would in all probability have been at the instance of John Shakspeare's eldest son and heir. The history of the family up to the period of William Shakspeare's manhood is as clear as can reasonably be expected.

The year of William Shakspeare's birth was a fearful year for Stratford. The plague raged with terrific violence in the little town. It was the same epidemic which ravaged Europe in that year; which in the previous year had desolated London, and still continued there. The red cross was probably not on the door of John Shakspeare's dwelling. "Fortunately for mankind," says Malone, "it did not reach the house where the infant Shakspeare lay; for not one of that name appears on the dead list."

The parish of Stratford, then, was unquestionably the birth-place of William Shakspeare. But in what part of Stratford dwelt his parents in the year 1564? It was ten years after this that his father became the purchaser of two freehold houses in Henley Street—houses which still exist. Nine years before William Shakspeare was born, his father had also purchased two copyhold tenements in Stratford—one in Greenhill Street, one in Henley Street. The copyhold house in Henley Street, purchased in 1555, was unquestionably not one of the freehold houses in the same street, purchased in 1574; yet, from Malone's loose way of stating that in 1555 the *lease* of a house in Henley Street was assigned to John Shakspeare, it has been conjectured that he purchased in 1574 the house he had occupied for many years. As he purchased two houses in 1555 in different parts of the town, it is not likely that he occupied both; he might not have occupied either. Before he purchased the two houses in Henley Street, in 1574, he occupied fourteen acres of meadow-land, with appurtenances, at a very high rent; the property is called Ingou meadow in "the Close Rolls." Dug-

dale calls the place where it was situated "Inge;" saying that it was a member of the manor of Old Stratford, "and signifyeth in our old English a meadow or low ground, the name well agreeing with its situation." It is about a mile and a quarter from the town of Stratford, on the road to Warwick. William Shakspeare, then, might have been born at either of his father's copyhold houses, in Greenhill Street, or in Henley Street; he might have been born at Ingon; or his father might have occupied one of the two freehold houses in Henley Street at the time of the birth of his eldest son. Tradition says that William Shakspeare *was* born in one of these houses; tradition points out the very room in which he was born. Let us not disturb the belief. To look upon that ancient house—perhaps now one of the oldest in Stratford—pilgrims have come from every region where the name of Shakspeare is known. The property passed into a younger branch of the poet's family; the descendants of that branch grew poorer and poorer; they sold off its orchards and gardens; they divided and subdivided it into smaller tenements; it became partly a butcher's shop, partly a little inn. The external appearance was greatly altered, and its humble front rendered still humbler. The windows in the roof were removed; and the half which had become the inn received a new brick casing. The central portion is that which is now shown as the birth-place of the illustrious man—"the myriad-minded."

There is a passage in one of Shakspeare's Sonnets, the 89th, which has induced a belief that he had the mis-

fortune of a physical defect, which would render him peculiarly the object of maternal solicitude :—

“ Say that thou didst forsake me for some fault,
And I will comment upon that offence :
Speak of my *lumeness*, and I straight will halt ;
Against thy reasons making no defence.”

Again, in the 37th Sonnet :—

“ As a decrepit father takes delight
To see his active child do deeds of youth,
So I, made *lame* by fortune's dearest spite,
Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth.”

These lines have been interpreted to mean that William Shakspeare was literally lame, and that his lameness was such as to limit him, when he became an actor, to the representation of the parts of old men. We should, on the contrary, have no doubt whatever that the verses we have quoted may be most fitly received in a metaphorical sense, were there not some subsequent lines in the 37th Sonnet which really appear to have a literal meaning ; and thus to render the previous *lame* and *lameness* expressive of something more than the general self-abasement which they would otherwise appear to imply. In the following lines *lame* means something distinct from *poor* and *despised* :—

“ For whether beauty, birth, or wealth, or wit,
Or any of these all, or all, or more,
Entitled in thy parts do crowned sit,
I make my love engrafted to this store :
So then I am not *lame*, poor, nor despis'd,
Whilst that this shadow doth such substance give.”

Of one thing, however, we may be quite sure—that, if Shakspeare were lame, his infirmity was not such as to disqualify him for active bodily exertion. The same

series of verses that have suggested this belief that he was lame also show that he was a horseman. His entire works exhibit that familiarity with external nature, with rural occupations, with athletic sports, which is incompatible with an inactive boyhood. It is not impossible that some natural defect, or some accidental injury, may have modified the energy of such a child, and have cherished in him that love of books, and traditional lore, and silent contemplation, without which his intellect could not have been nourished into its wondrous strength. But we cannot imagine William Shakspeare a petted child, chained to home, not breathing the free air upon his native hills, denied the boy's privilege to explore every nook of his own river. We would imagine him communing from the first with Nature, as Gray has painted him—

“ The *dauntless* child
Stretch'd forth his little arms and smil'd.”

The only qualifications necessary for the admission of a boy into the Free Grammar School of Stratford were, that he should be a resident in the town, of seven years of age, and able to read. The Grammar School was essentially connected with the Corporation of Stratford; and it is impossible to imagine that, when the son of John Shakspeare became qualified by age for admission to a school where the best education of the time was given, literally for nothing, his father, in that year, being chief alderman, should not have sent him to the school. We assume, without any hesitation, that William Shakspeare did receive in every just sense of the word the education of a scholar; and as such edu-

cation was to be had at his own door, we also assume that he was brought up at the Free Grammar School of his own town. His earlier instruction would therefore be a preparation for this school, and the probability is that such instruction was given him at home.

A question arises, did William Shakspeare receive his elementary instruction in Christianity from the books sanctioned by the Reformed Church? It has been maintained that his father belonged to the Roman Catholic persuasion. This belief rests upon the following foundation. In the year 1770, Thomas Hart, who then inhabited one of the tenements in Henley Street which had been bequeathed to his family by William Shakspeare's granddaughter, employed a bricklayer to new tile the house; and this bricklayer, by name Mosely, found hidden between the rafters and the tiling a manuscript consisting of six leaves stitched together, which he gave to Mr. Peyton, an alderman of Stratford, who sent it to Mr. Malone, through the Rev. Mr. Devonport, vicar of Stratford. This paper, which was first published by Malone in 1790, is printed also in Reed's Shakspeare and in Drake's 'Shakspeare and his Times.' It consists of fourteen articles, purporting to be a confession of faith of "John Shakspear, an unworthy member of the holy Catholic religion." We have no hesitation whatever in believing this document to be altogether a fabrication. Malone, when he first published the paper in his edition of Shakspeare, said—"I have taken some pains to ascertain the authenticity of this manuscript, and, after a very careful inquiry, am perfectly satisfied that it is genuine." In

1796, however, in his work on the Ireland forgeries, he asserts—"I have since obtained documents that clearly prove it could not have been the composition of any one of our poet's family." We not only do not believe that it was "the composition of any one of our poet's family," but we do not believe that it is the work of a Roman Catholic at all. That John Shakspeare was what we popularly call a Protestant in the year 1568, when his son William was four years old, may be shown by the clearest of proofs. He was in that year the chief magistrate of Stratford; he could not have become so without taking the Oath of Supremacy, according to the statute of the 1st of Elizabeth, 1558-9. To refuse this oath was made punishable with forfeiture and imprisonment, with the pains of præmunire and high treason. "The conjecture," says Chalmers (speaking in support of the authenticity of this confession of faith), "that Shakspeare's family were Roman Catholics is strengthened by the fact that his father declined to attend the corporation meetings, and was at last removed from the corporate body." He was removed from the corporate body in 1585, with a distinct statement of the reason for this removal—his non-attendance when summoned to the halls. According to this reasoning of Chalmers, John Shakspeare did not hesitate to take the Oath of Supremacy when he was chief magistrate in 1564, but retired from the corporation in 1585, where he might have remained without offence to his own conscience or to others, being, in the language of that day, a Popish recusant, to be stigmatized as such, persecuted, and subject to the

most odious restrictions. If he left or was expelled the corporation for his religious opinions, he would, of course, not attend the service of the church, for which offence he would be liable, in 1585, to a fine of 20*l.* per month; and then, to crown the whole, in this his last confession, spiritual will, and testament, he calls upon all his kinsfolks to assist and succour him after his death "with the holy sacrifice of the mass," with a promise that he "will not be ungrateful unto them for so great a benefit," well knowing that by the Act of 1581 the saying of mass was punishable by a year's imprisonment and a fine of 200 marks, and the hearing of it by a similar imprisonment and a fine of 100 marks. The fabrication appears to us as gross as can well be imagined.

To the grammar-school, then, with some preparation, we hold that William Shakspeare goes, about the year 1571. His father is at this time, as we have said, chief alderman of his town; he is a gentleman, now, of repute and authority; he is Master John Shakspeare; and assuredly the worthy curate of the neighbouring village of Luddington, Thomas Hunt, who was also the schoolmaster, would have received his new scholar with some kindness. As his "shining morning face" first passed out of the main street into that old court through which the upper room of learning was to be reached, a new life would be opening upon him. The humble minister of religion who was his first instructor has left no memorials of his talents or his acquirements; and in a few years another master came after him, Thomas Jenkins, also unknown to fame. All praise and honour

be to them; for it is impossible to imagine that the teachers of William Shakspeare were evil instructors—giving the boy husks instead of wholesome aliment. They could not have been harsh and perverse instructors, for such spoil the gentlest natures, and his was always gentle:—"My gentle Shakspeare" is he called by a rough but noble spirit—one in whom was all honesty and genial friendship under a rude exterior. His wondrous abilities could not be spoiled even by ignorant instructors.

The first who attempted to write 'Some Account of the Life of William Shakspeare,' Rowe, says, "His father, who was a considerable dealer in wool, had so large a family, ten children in all, that, though he was his eldest son, he could give him no better education than his own employment. He had bred him, it is true, for some time at a free-school, where, it is probable, he acquired what Latin he was master of; but the narrowness of his circumstances, and the want of his assistance at home, forced his father to withdraw him from thence, and unhappily prevented his further proficiency in that language." This statement, be it remembered, was written one hundred and thirty years after the event which it professes to record—the early removal of William Shakspeare from the free-school to which he had been sent by his father. We have no hesitation in saying that the statement is manifestly based upon two assumptions, both of which are incorrect:—The first, that his father had a large family of ten children, and was so narrowed in his circumstances that he could not

spare even the *time* of his eldest son, he being taught for nothing; and, secondly, that the son, by his early removal from the school where he acquired "what Latin he was master of," was prevented attaining a "proficiency in that language," his works manifesting "an ignorance of the ancients." It may be convenient that we should in this place endeavour to dispose of both these assertions.

The family of John Shakspeare did not consist, as we have already shown, of ten children. In the year 1578, when the school education of William may be reasonably supposed to have terminated, and before which period his "assistance at home" would rather have been embarrassing than useful to his father, the family consisted of five children: William, aged fourteen; Gilbert, twelve; Joan, nine; Anne, seven; and Richard, four. Anne died early in the following year; and, in 1580, Edmund, the youngest child, was born; so that the family never exceeded five living at the same time. But still the circumstances of John Shakspeare, even with five children, might have been straitened. The assertion of Rowe excited the persevering diligence of Malone; and he has collected together a series of documents from which he inters, or leaves the reader to infer, that John Shakspeare and his family gradually sunk from their station of respectability at Stratford into the depths of poverty and ruin. The sixth section of Malone's posthumous 'Life' is devoted to a consideration of this subject. It thus commences: "The manufacture of gloves, which was, at this period, a very flourishing one, both at Stratford and Worcester (in

which latter city it is still carried on with great success), however generally beneficial, should seem, from whatever cause, to have afforded our poet's father but a scanty maintenance." The assumption that John Shakspeare depended for his "maintenance" upon "the manufacture of gloves" rests entirely and absolutely upon one solitary entry in the books of the bailiff's court at Stratford. We have seen the original entry; and though we are not learned enough in palæography to pronounce whether the abridged word which commences the third line describes the occupation of John Shakspeare, this we know, that it does not consist of the letters *Glover*, as Malone prints it, he at the same time abridging the other words which are abbreviations in the record. No other entry in the same book, and there are many, recites the occupation of John Shakspeare; but the subjects in dispute which are sometimes mentioned in these entries look very unlike the litigations of a glover, whether he be plaintiff or defendant. For example, on the 19th of November, 1556, the year after the action against Malone's glover, John Shakspeare is complainant against Henry Field in a plea for unjustly detaining eighteen quarters of grain. This is scarcely the plea of a glover. But, glover or not, he was a landed proprietor and an occupier of land; and he did not, therefore, in the year 1578, depend upon the manufacture of gloves for "a scanty maintenance." However, be his occupation what it may, Malone affirms that "when our author was about fourteen years old" the "distressed situation" of his father was evident: it rests "upon surer grounds than conjecture." The Corporation

books have shown that on particular occasions, such as the visitation of the plague in 1564, John Shakspeare contributed like others to the relief of the poor; but now, in January, 1577-8, he is taxed for the necessities of the borough only to pay half what other aldermen pay; and in November of the same year, whilst other aldermen are assessed fourpence weekly towards the relief of the poor, John Shakspeare "shall not be taxed to pay anything." In 1579 the sum levied upon him for providing soldiers at the charge of the borough is returned, amongst similar sums of other persons, as "unpaid and unaccounted for." Finally, this unquestionable evidence of the books of the borough shows that this merciful forbearance of his brother townsmen was unavailing; for, in an action brought against him in the bailiff's court in the year 1586, he during these seven years having gone on from bad to worse, the return by the serjeants at mace upon a warrant of distress is, that John Shakspeare has nothing upon which distress can be levied. There are other corroborative proofs of John Shakspeare's poverty at this period brought forward by Malone. In this precise year, 1578, he mortgages his wife's inheritance of Asbies to Edmund Lambert for forty pounds; and, in the same year, the will of Mr. Roger Sadler of Stratford, to which is subjoined a list of debts due to him, shows that John Shakspeare was indebted to him five pounds, for which sum Edmund Lambert was a security,—“By which,” says Malone, “it appears that John Shakspeare was then considered insolvent, if not as one depending rather on the credit of others than his own.” It is of little con-

sequence to the present age to know whether an alderman of Stratford, nearly three hundred years past, became unequal to maintain his social position; but to enable us to form a right estimate of the education of William Shakspeare, and of the circumstances in which he was placed at the most influential period of his life, it may not be unprofitable to consider how far these revelations of the private affairs of his father support the case which Malone holds he has so triumphantly proved. The documents which he has brought forward certainly do not constitute the whole case; and, without lending ourselves to a spirit of advocacy, we believe that the inferences which have been drawn from them, and adopted by men of higher mark than their original promulgator, are altogether gratuitous and incongruous. We shall detain our readers a very short time, whilst, implicitly adopting all these discoveries (as they are called),—without attempting to infer that some of the circumstances may apply to another John Shakspeare,—we trace what we think a more probable course of the fortunes of the alderman of Stratford, until the period when his illustrious son had himself become the father of a family.

In the year 1568 John Shakspeare was high bailiff of Stratford. In 1571 he was chief alderman. The duties of the first office demanded a constant residence in Stratford. Beyond occasional attendance, the duties of the second office would be few. In 1570 he is the occupier of a small estate at Ingon, in the parish of Stratford, two miles from the town, at a rent which unquestionably shows that a house of importance was

attached to "the meadow." In 1574 he purchased two freehold houses in Henley Street, with gardens and orchards; and he probably occupied one or both of these. In 1578 he mortgaged the estate of Asbies to Edmund Lambert, who also appears to have been security for him for the sum of five pounds. At the time, then, when Malone holds that John Shakspeare is insolvent, because another is his security for five pounds, and that other the mortgagee of his estate, he is also excused public payments because he is poor. But he is the possessor of two freehold houses in Henley Street, bought in 1574. Malone, a lawyer by profession, supposes that the money for which Asbies was mortgaged went to pay the purchase of the Stratford freeholds; according to which theory, these freeholds had been unpaid for during four years, and the "good and lawful money" was not "in hand" when the vendor parted with the premises. We hold, and we think more reasonably, that in 1578, when he mortgaged Asbies, John Shakspeare became the purchaser, or at any rate the occupier, of lands in the parish of Stratford, but not in the borough; and that, in either case, the money for which Asbies was mortgaged was the capital employed in this undertaking. The lands which were purchased by William Shakspeare of the Combe family, in 1601, are described in the deed as "lying or being within the parish, fields, or town of Old Stretford." But the will of William Shakspeare, he having become the heir-at-law of his father, devises all his lands and tenements "within the towns, hamlets, villages, fields, and grounds of Stratford-upon-

Avon, Old Stratford, Bishopton, and Welcombe." Old Stratford is a local denomination, essentially different from Bishopton or Welcombe; and, therefore, whilst the lands purchased by the son in 1601 might be those recited in the will as lying in Old Stratford, he might have derived from his father the lands of Bishopton and Welcombe, of the purchase of which by himself we have no record. So, in the same way, the tenements referred to by the will as being in Stratford-upon-Avon, comprised not only the great house purchased by him, but the freeholds in Henley Street which he inherited from his father. Indeed it is expressly stated in a document of 1596, a memorandum upon the grant of arms in the Heralds' College to John Shakspeare, "he hath lands and tenements, of good wealth and substance, 500*l*." The lands of Bishopton and Welcombe are in the parish of Stratford, but not in the borough. Bishopton was a hamlet, having an ancient chapel of ease. We hold, then, that in the year 1578 John Shakspeare ceased, though perhaps not wholly so, to reside within the borough of Stratford. Other aldermen are rated to pay towards the furniture of pikemen, billmen, and archers, six shillings and eight-pence; whilst John Shakspeare is to pay three shillings and four-pence. Why less than other aldermen? The next entry but one, which relates to a brother alderman, answers the question:—

"Robert Bratt, *nothing* IN THIS PLACE."

Again, ten months after,—“It is ordained that every alderman shall pay weekly, towards the relief of the poor, four-pence, save John Shakspeare and *Robert*

Bratt, who shall not be taxed to pay anything." Here John Shakspeare is associated with Robert Bratt, who, according to the previous entry, was to pay nothing in this place; that is, in the *borough* of Stratford, to which the orders of the council alone apply. The return, in 1579, of Mr. Shakspeare as leaving unpaid the sum of three shillings and three pence, was the return upon a levy for the borough, in which, although the possessor of property, he might have ceased to reside. Seven years after this comes the celebrated return to the warrant of distress, that John Shakspeare has nothing to distrain upon. The jurisdiction of the bailiff's court of Stratford is wholly confined to the borough; and out of the borough the officers could not go. We have traced the course of this action in the bailiff's books of Stratford, beyond the entries which Malone gives us. It continued before the court for nearly five months; proceeding after proceeding being taken upon it, with a pertinacity on the part of the defendant which appears far more like the dogged resistance of a wealthy man to a demand which he thought unjust, than that of a man in the depths of poverty, seeking to evade a payment which must be ultimately enforced by the seizure of his goods, or by a prison. The *distringas*, which the officers of the borough of Stratford *could* not execute, was followed by a *capias*; and then, no doubt, the debt was paid, and the heavier fees of the lawyers discharged. Further, in the very year of this action, John Shakspeare ceases to be a member of the corporation; and the circumstances attending his withdrawal or removal from that body are strongly confirmatory of

the view we have taken. "I find," says Malone, "on inspecting the records, that our poet's father had not attended at any hall for the seven preceding years." This is perfectly correct. At these halls, except on the very rarest occasions, the members attending do not sign their names; but after the entry of the preliminary form by the town-clerk,—such as "Stratford Burgus, ad aulam ibid. tent. vi. die Septembris anno regni dñæ Elizabethæ vicesimo octavo,"—the town-clerk enters the names of all the aldermen and burgesses, and there is a dot or other mark placed against the names of those who are in attendance. The last entry in which the name of John Shakspeare is so distinguished as attending occurs in 1579. But at the hall held on the 6th of September, in the 28th of Elizabeth, is this entry:—"At this hall William Smythe and Richard Courte are chosen to be aldermen in the place of John Wheler and John Shaxspere; for that Mr. Wheler doth desyer to be put out of the companye, and Mr. Shaxspere doth not come to the halls when they be warned, nor hath not done of long tyme." Is it not more credible that, from the year 1579 till the year 1586, when he was removed from the corporation, in all probability by his own consent, John Shakspeare was not dwelling in the *borough* of Stratford,—that he had ceased to take an interest in its affairs, although he was unwilling to forego its dignities;—than that during these seven years he was struggling with hopeless poverty; that he allowed his brother aldermen and burgesses to sit in judgment on his means of paying the assessments of the borough; that they consented to reduce and altogether to dis-

charge his assessment, although he was the undoubted possessor of property within the borough; that he proclaimed his poverty in the most abject manner, and proclaimed it untruly whilst he held any property at all, and his lands were mortgaged for a very inadequate sum, when the first object of an embarrassed man would have been to have upheld his credit by making an effort to meet every public demand? What is the most extraordinary thing of all is, that he should have recovered this long humiliation so suddenly that, in 1596, he goes to the College of Arms for additions to his armorial bearings, and states that he is worth five hundred pounds in lands and tenements. During this period he was unquestionably a resident in the *parish* of Stratford; for the register of that parish contains the entry of the burial of a daughter in 1579, and the baptism of a son in 1580. His grandchildren, also, are baptized in that parish in 1583 and 1585. But his assessments in "that place"—the borough—are reduced in 1578, and wholly foregone in 1579. He has ceased to be amenable to the borough assessments. The lands of Welcombe and Bishopton, we may fairly assume, were his home. He has not been dependent upon the trade of Stratford, whether in gloves or wool. He is a cultivator, and his profits are not very variable. His son purchases a large quantity of land in the same district a few years afterwards; and that son himself becomes a cultivator, even whilst he is the most successful dramatist of his time. That son has also his actions in the bailiff's court, as his father had, for corn sold and delivered, of which more hereafter. That son cleaves

to his native place with a love which no fame won, no pleasure enjoyed, in the great capital,—the society of the great, the praises of the learned,—can extinguish. Neither does that son take any part in the affairs of the borough. He purchases the best house in Stratford in 1597, but the records of Stratford show that he had no desire for local honours. The father, instead of sinking into poverty, appears to us to have separated himself from the concerns of the borough, and from the society of the honest men who administered them. He probably had not more happiness in his struggle to maintain the rank of gentleman; but that he did make that struggle is, we think, consistent with all the circumstances upon record. That the children of William Shakspeare should have been brought up at Stratford,—that Stratford should have been his home, although London was his place of necessary sojourn,—is, we think, quite incompatible with the belief that, at the exact period when the poet was gaining rapid wealth as a sharer in the Blackfriars Theatre, the father was so reduced to the extremity of indigence that he had nothing to distraint upon in his dwelling in the place where he had dwelt for years, in competence and honour.

Seeing, then, that at any rate in the year 1574, when John Shakspeare purchased two freehold houses in Stratford, it was scarcely necessary for him to withdraw his son William from school, as Rowe has it, on account of the narrowness of his circumstances (the education at that school costing the father nothing), it is not difficult to believe that the son remained there till the

period when boys were usually withdrawn from grammar-schools. In those days the education of the university commenced much earlier than at present. Boys intended for the learned professions, and more especially for the church, commonly went to Oxford and Cambridge at eleven or twelve years of age. If they were not intended for those professions, they probably remained at the grammar-school till they were thirteen or fourteen; and then they were fitted for being apprenticed to tradesmen, or articulated to attorneys, a numerous and thriving body in those days of cheap litigation. Many also went early to the Inns of Court, which were the universities of the law, and where there was real study and discipline in direct connection with the several Societies. To assume that William Shakspeare did not stay long enough at the grammar-school of Stratford to obtain a very fair "proficiency in Latin," with some knowledge of Greek, is to assume an absurdity upon the face of the circumstances; and it could never have been assumed at all, had not Rowe, setting out upon a false theory, that, because in the works of Shakspeare "we scarce find any traces of anything that looks like an imitation of the ancients," held that *therefore* "his not copying at least something from them may be an argument of his never having read them." Opposed to this is the statement of Aubrey, much nearer to the times of Shakspeare: "he understood Latin pretty well." Rowe had been led into his illogical inference by the "small Latin and less Greek" of Jonson; the "old mother-wit" of Denham; the "his learning was very little" of Fuller; the "native wood-

notes wild " of Milton,—phrases, every one of which is to be taken with considerable qualification, whether we regard the peculiar characters of the utterers, or the circumstances connected with the words themselves. The question rests not upon the interpretation of the dictum of this authority or that, but upon the indisputable fact that the very earliest writings of Shakspeare are imbued with a spirit of classical antiquity, and that the allusive nature of the learning that manifests itself in them, whilst it offers the best proof of his familiarity with the ancient writers, is a circumstance which has misled those who never attempted to dispute the existence of the learning which was displayed in the direct pedantry of his contemporaries. "*If*," said Hales of Eton, "he had not *read* the classics, he had likewise not *stolen* from them." Marlowe, Greene, Peele, and all the early dramatists, overload their plays with quotation and mythological allusion. According to Hales, they steal, and therefore they have read. He who uses his knowledge skilfully is assumed not to have read.

It is not our intention here to enter upon a general examination of the various opinions that have been held as to the learning of Shakspeare, and the tendency of those opinions to show that he was without learning. We only desire to point out, by a very few observations, that the learning manifested in his early productions does not bear out the assertion of Rowe that his proficiency in the Latin language was interrupted by his early removal from the free-school of Stratford. His youthful poem, 'Venus and Adonis,' the first heir of his invention, is upon a classical subject. The 'Rape of

Lucrece' is founded upon a legend of the beginnings of Roman history. Would he have ventured upon these subjects had he been unfamiliar with the ancient writers, from the attentive study of which he could alone obtain the knowledge which would enable him to treat them with propriety? His was an age of sound scholarship. He dedicates both poems to a scholar, and a patron of scholars. Does any one of his contemporaries object that these classical subjects were treated by a young man ignorant of the classics? Will the most critical examination of these poems detect anything that betrays this ignorance? Is there not the most perfect keeping in both these poems,—an original conception of the mode of treating these subjects, advisedly adopted, with the full knowledge of what might be imitated, but preferring the vigorous painting of nature to any imitation? 'Love's Labour's Lost,' undoubtedly one of the earliest comedies, shows—upon the principle laid down by Coleridge, that "a young author's first work almost always bespeaks his recent pursuits"—that the habits of William Shakspeare "had been scholastic, and those of a student." The 'Comedy of Errors' is full of those imitations of the ancients in particular passages which critics have in all cases been too apt to take as the chief evidences of learning. The critics of Shakspeare are puzzled by these imitations; and when they see with what skill he adopts, or amends, or rejects, the incidents of the 'Menæchmi' of Plautus, they have no resource but to contend that his knowledge of Plautus was derived from a wretched translation, published in all probability eight or ten years

after 'The Comedy of Errors' was written. The three Parts of 'Henry VI.' are the earliest of the historical plays. Those who dispute the genuineness of the First Part affirm that it contains more allusions to mythology and classical authors than Shakspeare ever uses; but, with a most singular inconsistency, in the passages of the Second and Third Parts which they have chosen to pronounce as the additions of Shakspeare to the original plays of another writer or writers, there are to be found as many allusions to mythology and classical writers as in the part which they deny to be his. We have observed upon these passages that they furnish the proof that, as a young writer, he possessed a competent knowledge of the ancient authors, and was not unwilling to display it; "but that, with that wonderful judgment which was as remarkable as the prodigious range of his imaginative powers, he soon learnt to avoid the pedantry to which inferior men so pertinaciously clung in the pride of their scholarship." Ranging over the whole dramatic works of Shakspeare, whenever we find a classical image or allusion, such as in 'Hamlet,'—

"A station like the herald Mercury,
New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill,"—

the management of the idea is always elegant and graceful; and the passage may sustain a contrast with the most refined imitations of his contemporaries, or of his own imitator, Milton. In his Roman plays he appears co-existent with his wonderful characters, and to have read all the obscure pages of Roman history with a clearer eye than philosopher or historian. When he

employs Latinisms in the construction of his sentences, and even in the creation of new words, he does so with singular facility and unerring correctness. And then, we are to be told, he managed all this by studying bad translations, and by copying extracts from grammars and dictionaries; as if it was reserved for such miracles of talent and industry as the Farmers and the Steevenses to read Ovid and Virgil in their original tongues, whilst the dull Shakspeare, whether schoolboy or adult, was to be contented through life with the miserable translations of Arthur Golding and Thomas Phaer.* We believe that his familiarity at least with the best Roman writers was begun early, and continued late; and that he, of all boys of Stratford, would be the least likely to discredit the teaching of Thom^{as} Hunt and Thomas Jenkins, the masters of the grammar-school from 1572 till 1580.

There were other agencies than the grammar-school at work in the direction of Shakspeare's inquiring boyhood. There are local associations connected with Stratford which could not be without their influence in the formation of his mind. Within the range of such a boy's curiosity were the fine old historic towns of Warwick and Coventry, the sumptuous palace of Kenilworth, the grand monastic remains of Evesham. His own Avon abounded with spots of singular beauty, quiet hamlets, solitary woods. Nor was Stratford shut

* See a series of learned and spirited papers by the late Dr. Maginn on Farmer's 'Essay,' printed in Fraser's Magazine, 1839.

out from the general world, as many country towns are. It was a great highway; and dealers with every variety of merchandise resorted to its fairs. The eyes of Shakspeare must always have been open for observation. When he was twelve years old Elizabeth made her celebrated progress to Lord Leicester's castle of Kenilworth. Was William Shakspeare at Kenilworth in that summer of 1575, when the great Dudley entertained the queen with a splendour which annalists have delighted to record, and upon which one of our own days has bestowed a fame more imperishable than that of any annals? Percy, speaking of the old Coventry Hock-play, says, "Whatever this old play or storial show was at the time it was exhibited to Queen Elizabeth, it had probably our young Shakspeare for a spectator, who was then in his twelfth year, and doubtless attended with all the inhabitants of the surrounding country at these 'princely pleasures of Kenilworth,' whence Stratford is only a few miles distant." The preparations for this celebrated entertainment were on so magnificent a scale, the purveyings must have been so enormous, the posts so unintermitting, that there had needed not the flourishings of paragraphs (for the age of paragraphs was not as yet) to have roused the curiosity of all mid-England. In 1575, when Robert Dudley welcomed his sovereign with a more than regal magnificence, it is easy to believe that his ambition looked for a higher reward than that of continuing a queen's most favoured servant and counsellor. It appears to us that the exquisite speech of Oberon in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' is founded upon a recollection of

what the young Shakspeare heard of the intent of the princely pleasures of Kenilworth, and is associated with some of the poetical devices which he might have there beheld :—

Obs. My gentle Puck, come hither : Thou remember'st
Since once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid, on a dolphin's back,
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,
That the rude sea grew civil at her song ;
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,
To hear the sea-maid's music.

Puck.

I remember.

Obs. That very time I saw, (but thou couldst not,)
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
Cupid all arm'd ; a certain aim he took
At a fair vestal, throned by the west ;
And loos'd his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts :
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon ;
And the imperial votaress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free."

The most remarkable of the shows of Kenilworth were associated with the mythology and the romance of lakes and seas. "Triton, in likeness of a mermaid, came towards the Queen's Majesty." "Arion appeared sitting on a dolphin's back." So the quaint and really poetical George Gascoigne, in his 'Brief Rehearsal, or rather a true Copy of as much as was presented before her Majesty at Kenilworth.' But the diffuse and most entertaining coxcomb Laneham describes a song of Arion with an ecstasy which may justify the belief that the "dulcet and harmonious breath" of "the sea-

maid's music" might be the echo of the melodies heard by the young poet as he stood beside the lake at Kenilworth:—"Now, Sir, the ditty in metre so aptly endited to the matter, and after by voice deliciously delivered; the song, by a skilful artist into his parts so sweetly sorted; each part in his instrument so clean and sharply touched; every instrument again in his kind so excellently tunable; and this in the evening of the day, resounding from the calm waters, where the presence of her Majesty, and longing to listen, had utterly damped all noise and din, the whole harmony conveyed in time, tune, and temper thus incomparably melodious, with what pleasure (Master Martin), with what sharpness of conceit, with what lively delight this might pierce into the hearers' hearts, I pray ye imagine yourself, as ye may." If Elizabeth be the "fair vestal throned by the west," of which there can be no reasonable doubt, the most appropriate scene of the mermaid's song would be Kenilworth, and "that very time" the summer of 1575. There were other circumstances connected with his locality which were favourable to the cultivation of the dramatic spirit in the boy-poet. It requires not the imagination of the romance-writer to assume that before William Shakspeare was sixteen, that is, before the year 1580, when the pageants at Coventry, with one or two rare exceptions, were finally suppressed, he would be a spectator of one of these remarkable performances, which were in a few years wholly to perish; becoming, however, the foundations of a drama more suited to the altered spirit of the people, more universal in its range,—the drama of the laity, and not of the church.

The ancient accounts of the Chamberlain of the borough of Stratford exhibit a number of payments made out of the funds of the corporation for theatrical performances. In 1569, when John Shakspeare was chief magistrate, there is a payment of nine shillings to the Queen's players, and of twelve-pence to the Earl of Worcester's players. In 1573 the Earl of Leicester's players received six shillings and eight-pence. In 1574 "my Lord of Warwick's players" have a gratuity of seventeen shillings, and the Earl of Worcester's players of five and seven-pence. In 1577 "my Lord of Leicester's players" receive fifteen shillings, and "my Lord of Worcester's players" three and four-pence. In 1579 and 1580 the entries are more circumstantial:—

"1579. Item paid to my Lord Strange men the xith day of February at the comāundement of Mr. Bayliffe, vs.

P^d at the comāndement of Mr. Baliffe to the Countys of Essex plears, xivs. vid.

1580. P^d to the Earle of Darbyes players at the comāundement of Mr. Baliffe, viiis. ivd."

It thus appears that there had been three sets of players at Stratford within a short distance of the time when William Shakspeare was sixteen years of age.

It is a curious circumstance that the most precise and interesting account which we possess of one of the earliest of the theatrical performances is from the recollection of a man who was born in the same year as William Shakspeare. In 1639 R. W. (R. Willis), stating his age to be seventy-five, published a little volume, called 'Mount Tabor,' which contains a pas-

sage, "upon a stage-play which I saw when I was a child," which is essential to be given in any history or sketch of the early stage :

"In the city of Gloucester the manner is (as I think it is in other like corporations) that, when players of interludes come to town, they first attend the mayor, to inform him what nobleman's servants they are, and so to get licence for their public playing; and if the mayor like the actors, or would show respect to their lord and master, he appoints them to play their first play before himself and the aldermen and common council of the city; and that is called the mayor's play, where every one that will comes in without money, the mayor giving the players a reward as he thinks fit, to show respect unto them. At such a play my father took me with him, and made me stand between his legs, as he sat upon one of the benches, where we saw and heard very well. The play was called 'The Cradle of Security,' wherein was personated a king or some great prince, with his courtiers of several kinds, amongst which three ladies were in special grace with him, and they, keeping him in delights and pleasures, drew him from his graver counsellors, hearing of sermons, and listening to good counsel and admonitions, that in the end they got him to lie down in a cradle upon the stage, where these three ladies, joining in a sweet song, rocked him asleep, that he snorted again, and in the mean time closely conveyed under the clothes wherewithal he was covered a vizard like a swine's snout upon his face, with three wire chains fastened thereunto, the other end whereof being holden

severally by those three ladies, who fall to singing again, and then discovered his face, that the spectators might see how they had transformed him going on with their singing. Whilst all this was acting, there came forth of another door at the farthest end of the stage two old men, the one in blue, with a sergeant-at-arms his mace on his shoulder, the other in red, with a drawn sword in his hand, and leaning with the other hand upon the other's shoulder, and so they two went along in a soft pace, round about by the skirt of the stage, till at last they came to the cradle, when all the court was in greatest jollity, and then the foremost old man with his mace stroke a fearful blow upon the cradle, whereat all the courtiers, with the three ladies and the vizard, all vanished; and the desolate prince, starting up barefaced, and finding himself thus sent for to judgment, made a lamentable complaint of his miserable case, and so was carried away by wicked spirits. This prince did personate in the moral the wicked of the world; the three ladies, pride, covetousness, and luxury; the two old men, the end of the world and the last judgment. This sight took such impression in me, that when I came towards man's estate it was as fresh in my memory as if I had seen it newly acted."

We now understand why the bailiff of Stratford paid the players out of the public money. The first performance of each company in this town was the bailiff's, or chief magistrate's, play; and thus, when the father of William Shakspeare was bailiff, the boy might have stood "between his legs as he sat upon one of the benches."

The hall of the Guild, which afterwards became the Town Hall, was the occasional theatre of Stratford. It is now a long room, and somewhat low, the building being divided into two floors, the upper of which is used as the Grammar School. The elevation for the Court at one end of the hall would form the stage; and on one side is an ancient separate chamber to which the performers would retire. With a due provision of benches, about three hundred persons could be accommodated in this room; and no doubt Mr. Bailiff would be liberal in the issue of his invitations, so that Stratford might not grudge its expenditure of five shillings.

It would appear from Willis's description that 'The Cradle of Security' was for the most part dumb show. It is probable that he was present at its performance at Gloucester when he was six or seven years of age; it evidently belongs to that class of moral plays which were of the simplest construction. And yet it was popular long after the English drama had reached its highest eminence. When the pageants and mysteries had been put down by the force of public opinion, when spectacles of a dramatic character had ceased to be employed as instruments of religious instruction, the professional players who had sprung up founded their popularity for a long period upon the ancient habits and associations of the people. Our drama was essentially formed by a course of steady progress, and not by rapid transition. We are accustomed to say that the drama was created by Shakspeare, Marlowe, Greene, Kyd, and a few others of distinguished genius; but they all of them worked upon a foundation which was ready for

them. The superstructure of real tragedy and comedy had to be erected upon the moral plays, the romances, the histories, which were beginning to be popular in the very first days of Queen Elizabeth, and continued to be so, even in their very rude forms, beyond the close of her long reign.

The controversy upon the lawfulness of stage-plays was a remarkable feature of the period which we are now noticing; and, as pamphlets were to that age what newspapers are to ours, there can be little doubt that even in the small literary society of Stratford the tracts upon this subject might be well known. The dispute about the Theatre was a contest between the holders of opposite opinions in religion. The Puritans, who even at that time were strong in their zeal^d if not in their numbers, made the Theatre the especial object of their indignation, for its unquestionable abuses allowed them so to frame their invectives that they might tell with double force against every description of public amusement, against poetry in general, against music, against dancing, associated as they were with the excesses of an ill-regulated stage. A Treatise of John Northbrooke, licensed for the press in 1577, is directed against "dicing, dancing, vain plays, or interludes." Gosson, who had been a student of Christchurch, Oxford, had himself written two or three plays previous to his publication, in 1579, of *The School of Abuse*, containing a Pleasant Invective against Poets, Pipers, Players, Jesters, and such-like Caterpillars of a Commonwealth. This book, written with considerable ostentation of learning, and indeed with no common vigour and occa-

sional eloquence, defeats its own purposes by too large an aim. Poets, whatever be the character of their poetry, are the objects of Gosson's new-born hostility. The three abuses of the time are held to be inseparable:—"As poetry and piping are cousin-germans, so piping and playing are of great affinity, and all three chained in links of abuse." If the young Shakspeare had his ambition turned towards dramatic poetry when he was sixteen, that ambition was not likely to be damped by Gosson's general declamation.

The earliest, and the most permanent, of poetical associations are those which are impressed upon the mind by localities which have a deep historical interest. It would be difficult to find a district possessing more striking remains of a past time than the neighbourhood in which William Shakspeare spent his youth. The poetical feeling which the battle-fields, and castles, and monastic ruins of mid England would excite in him, may be reasonably considered to have derived an intensity through the real history of these celebrated spots being vague, and for the most part traditional. The age of local historians had not yet arrived. The monuments of the past were indeed themselves much more fresh and perfect than in the subsequent days, when every tomb inscription was copied, and every mouldering document set forth. But in the year 1580, if William Shakspeare desired to know, for example, with some precision, the history which belonged to those noble towers of Warwick upon which he had often gazed with a delight that scarcely required to be based upon knowledge, he would look in vain for any guide

to his inquiries. Some old people might tell him that they remembered their fathers to have spoken of one John Rous, the son of Geoffrey Rous of Warwick, who, having diligently studied at Oxford, and obtained a reputation for uncommon learning, rejected all ambitious thoughts, shut himself up with his books in the solitude of Guy's Cliff, and was engaged to the last in writing the Chronicles of his country, and especially the history of his native County and its famous Earls : and there, in the quiet of that pleasant place, performing his daily offices of devotion as a chantry priest in the little chapel, did John Rous live a life of happy industry till 1491. But the world in general derived little profit from his labours. Yet if the future Poet sustained some disadvantage by living before the days of antiquarian minuteness, he could still dwell in the past, and people it with the beings of his own imagination. The Chroniclers would, however, afford him ample materials to work into his own topography. There was a truth which was to be found amidst all the mistakes and contradictions of the annalists—the great poetical truth, that the devices of men are insufficient to establish any permanent command over events ; that crime would be followed by retribution ; that evil passions would become their own tormentors ; that injustice could not be successful to the end ; that although dimly seen and unwillingly acknowledged, the great presiding power of the world could make evil work for good, and advance the general happiness out of the particular misery. This was the mode, we believe, in which that thoughtful youth read the Chronicles of his

country, whether brief or elaborate. Looking at them by the strong light of local association, there would be local tradition at hand to enforce that universal belief in the justice of God's providence which is in itself alone one of the many proofs of that justice.

Hall, the chronicler, writing his history of 'The Families of Lancaster and York,' about seventy years after the "continual dissension for the crown of this noble realm" was terminated, says,—“What nobleman liveth at this day, or what gentleman of any ancient stock or progeny is clear, whose lineage hath not been infested and plagued with this unnatural division?” During the boyhood of William Shakspeare, it cannot be doubted that he would meet with many a gentleman, and many a yeoman, who would tell him how their forefathers had been thus “infested and plagued.” The traditions of the most stirring events of that contest would at this time be about a century old; generally diluted in their interest by passing through the lips of three or four generations, but occasionally presented vividly to the mind of the inquiring boy in the narration of some amongst the “hoary-headed eld,” whose fathers had fought at Bosworth or Tewksbury. Many of these traditions, too, would be essentially local; extending back even to the period when the banished Duke of Hereford, in his bold march

“From Ravenspurg to Cotswold,” *

gathered a host of followers in the counties of Derby, Nottingham, Leicester, Warwick, and Worcester.

* ‘Richard II.,’ Act 2, scene 3.

Fields, where battles had been fought; towns, where parliaments had assembled, and treaties had been ratified; castles, where the great leaders had stood at bay, or had sallied forth upon the terrified country—such were the objects which the young poet would associate with many an elaborate description of the chroniclers, and many an interesting anecdote of his ancient neighbours. It appears to us that his dramatic power was early directed towards this long and complicated story, by some principle even more exciting than its capabilities for the purposes of the drama. It was the story, we think, which was presented to him in the evening-talk around the hearth of his childhood; it was the story whose written details were most accessible to him, being narrated by Hall with a rare minuteness of picturesque circumstance; but it was a story also of which his own district had been the scene, in many of its most stirring events. Out of ten English Historical Plays which were written by him, and some undoubtedly amongst his first performances, he has devoted eight to circumstances belonging to this memorable story. No other nation ever possessed such a history of the events of a century,—a history in which the agents are not the hard abstractions of warriors and statesmen, but men of flesh and blood like ourselves; men of passion, and crime, and virtue, elevated perhaps by the poetical art, but filled, also through that art, with such a wondrous life, that we dwell amongst them as if they were of our own day, and feel that they must have spoken as he has made them speak, and act as he has made them act. It is in vain that we are told that some events are

omitted, and some transposed; that documentary history does not exhibit its evidence *here*, that a contemporary narrative somewhat militates against the representation *there*. The general truth of this dramatic history cannot be shaken. It is a philosophical history in the very highest sense of that somewhat abused term. It contains the philosophy that can only be produced by the union of the noblest imagination with the most just and temperate judgment. It is the loftiness of the poetical spirit which has enabled Shakspeare alone to write this history with impartiality. Open the chronicles, and we find the prejudices of the Yorkist or the Lancastrian manifesting the intensity of the old factious hatred. Who can say to which faction Shakspeare belongs? He has comprehended the whole, whilst others knew only a part.

The last play of the series which belongs to the wars of the Roses is unquestionably written altogether with a more matured power than those which preceded it; yet the links which connect it with the other three plays of the series are so unbroken, the treatment of character is so consistent, and the poetical conception of the whole so uniform, that, whatever amount of criticism may be yet in store to show that our view is incorrect, we now confidently speak of them all as the plays of Shakspeare, and of Shakspeare alone. Matured, especially in its wonderful exhibition of character, as the 'Richard III.' is, we cannot doubt that the subject was very early familiar to the young poet's mind. The Battle of Bosworth Field was the great event of his own locality, which for a century had fixed the government of England. The

course of the Reformation, and especially the dissolution of the Monasteries, had produced great social changes, which were in operation at the time in which William Shakspeare was born; whose effects, for good and for evil, he must have seen working around him, as he grew from year to year in knowledge and experience. But those events were too recent, and indeed of too delicate a nature, to assume the poetical aspect in his mind. They abided still in the region of prejudice and controversy. It was dangerous to speak of the great religious divisions of the kingdom with a tolerant impartiality. History could scarcely deal with these opinions in a spirit of justice. Poetry, thus, which has regard to what is permanent and universal, has passed ~~by~~ by these matters, important as they are. But the great event which placed the Tudor family on the throne, and gave England a stable government, however occasionally distracted by civil and religious division, was an event which would seize fast upon such a mind as that of William Shakspeare. His ancestor, there can be little doubt, had been an adherent of the Earl of Richmond. For his faithful services to the conqueror at Bosworth he was rewarded, as we are assured, by lands in Warwickshire. That field of Bosworth would therefore have to him a family as well as a local interest. Burton, the historian of Leicestershire, who was born about ten years after William Shakspeare, tells us "that his great-grandfather, John Hardwick, of Lindley, near Bosworth, a man of very short stature, but active and courageous, tendered his service to Henry, with some troops of horse, the night he lay at Atherston, became

his guide to the field, advised him in the attack, and how to profit by the sun and by the wind." Burton further says, writing in 1622, that the inhabitants living around the plain called Bosworth Field, more properly the plain of Sutton, "have many occurrences and passages yet fresh in memory, by reason that some persons thereabout, which saw the battle fought, were living within less than forty years, of which persons myself have seen some, and have heard of their disclosures, though related by the second hand." This "living within less than forty years" would take us back to about the period which we are now viewing in relation to the life of Shakspeare. But certainly there is something over-marvellous in Burton's story, to enable us to think that William Shakspeare, even as a very young boy, could have conversed with "some persons thereabout" who had seen a battle fought in 1485. That as Burton more reasonably of himself says, he might have "heard their discourses at second-hand" is probable enough. Bosworth Field is about thirty miles from Stratford. Burton says that the plain derives its name from Bosworth, "not that this battle was fought at this place (it being fought in a large, flat plain, and spacious ground, three miles distant from this town, between the towns of Shenton, Sutton, Dadlington, and Stoke); but for that this town was the most worthy town of note near adjacent, and was therefore called Bosworth Field. That this battle was fought in this plain appeareth by many remarkable places: By a little mount cast up, where the common report is, that at the first beginning of the battle Henry Earl of Richmond

made his perænetical oration to his army; by divers pieces of armour, weapons, and other warlike accoutrements, and by many arrowheads here found, whereof, about twenty years since, at the enclosure of the lordship of Stoke, great store were digged up, of which some I have now (1622) in my custody, being of a long, large, and big proportion, far greater than any now in use; as also by relation of the inhabitants, who have many occurrences and passages yet fresh in memory." Burton goes on to tell two stories connected with the eventful battle. The one was the vision of King Richard, of "divers fearful ghosts running about him, not suffering him to take any rest, still crying 'Revenge.'" Hall relates the tradition thus:—"The same ~~year~~ that he had the same night a dreadful and a terrible dream, for it seemed to him, being asleep, that he saw divers images like terrible devils, not suffering him to take any quiet or rest." Burton says, previous to his description of the dream, "The vision is *reported* to be in this manner." And certainly his account of the fearful ghosts "still crying Revenge" is essentially different from that of the chronicler. Shakspeare has followed the more poetical account of the old local historian; which, however, could not have been known to him:—

" Methought the souls of all that I have murder'd
Came to my tent; and every one did threat
To-morrow's vengeance on the head of Richard."

Did Shakspeare obtain his notion from the same source as Burton—from "relation of the inhabitants who have many occurrences and passages yet fresh in memory?"

The localities amidst which Shakspeare lived were, as

we have thus seen, highly favourable to his cultivation of a poetical reverence for antiquity. But his unerring observation of the present prevented the past becoming to him an illusion. He had always an earnest patriotism; he had a strong sense of the blessings which had been conferred upon his own day through the security won out of peril and suffering by the middle classes. The destruction of the old institutions, after the first evil effects had been mitigated by the energy of the people, had diffused capital, and had caused it to be employed with more activity. But he, who scarcely ever stops to notice the political aspects of his own day, cannot forbear an indignant comment upon the sufferings of the very poorest, which, if not caused by, were at least coincident with, the great spoliation of the property of the Church. Poor Tom, "who is whipped from tithing to tithing, and stocked, punished, and imprisoned," was no fanciful portrait; he was the creature of the pauper legislation of half a century. Exhortations in the churches, "for the furtherance of the relief of such as were in unfeigned misery," were prescribed by the statute of the 1st of Edward VI.; but the same statute directs that the unhappy wanderer, after certain forms of proving that he has not offered himself for work, shall be marked V with a hot iron upon his breast, and adjudged to be "*a slave*" for two years to him who brings him before justices of the peace; and the statute goes on to direct the slave-owner "to cause the said slave to work by beating, chaining, or otherwise." Three years afterwards the statute is repealed, seeing that it could not be carried into effect by reason

of the multitude of vagabonds and the extremity of their wants. The whipping and the stocking were applied by successive enactments of Elizabeth. The gallows, too, was always at hand to make an end of the wanderers when, hunted from tithing to tithing, they inevitably became thieves. Nothing but a compulsory provision for the maintenance of the poor could then have saved England from a fearful Jacquerie. It cannot reasonably be doubted that the vast destruction of capital by the dissolution of the monasteries threw for many years a quantity of superfluous labour upon the yet unsettled capital of the ordinary industry of the country. That Shakspeare had witnessed much of this misery is evident from his constant disposition to descry "a soul of goodness in things evil," and from his indignant hatred of the heartlessness of petty authority :—

"Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand."

And yet, with many social evils about him, the age of Shakspeare's youth was one in which the people were making a great intellectual progress. The poor were ill provided for. The Church was in an unsettled state, attacked by the natural restlessness of those who looked upon the Reformation with regret and hatred, and by the rigid enemies of its traditionary ceremonies and ancient observances, who had sprung up in its bosom. The promises which had been made that education should be fostered by the State had utterly failed : for even the preservation of the universities, and the protection and establishment of a few grammar-schools, had been unwillingly conceded by the avarice of those

daring statesmen who had swallowed up the riches of the ancient establishment. The genial spirit of the English yeomanry had received a check from the intolerance of the powerful sect who frowned upon all sports and recreations—who despised the arts—who held poets and pipers to be “caterpillars of a commonwealth.” But yet the wonderful stirring up of the intellect of the nation had made it an age favourable for the cultivation of the highest literature; and most favourable to those who looked upon society, as the young Shakspeare must have looked, in the spirit of cordial enjoyment and practical wisdom.

Charlcote:—the name is familiar to every reader of Shakspeare; but it is not presented to the world under the influence of pleasant associations with the world's poet. The story, which was first told by Rowe, must be here repeated:—“An extravagance that he was guilty of forced him both out of his country, and that way of living which he had taken up; and though it seemed at first to be a blemish upon his good manners, and a misfortune to him, yet it afterwards happily proved the occasion of exerting one of the greatest geniuses that ever was known in dramatic poetry. He had, by a misfortune common enough to young fellows, fallen into ill company, and, amongst them, some that made a frequent practice of deer-stealing engaged him more than once in robbing a park that belonged to Sir Thomas Lucy, of Charlcote, near Stratford. For this he was prosecuted by that gentleman, as he thought, somewhat too severely; and, in order to revenge that

ill usage, he made a ballad upon him. And though this, probably the first essay of his poetry, be lost, yet it is said to have been so very bitter, that it redoubled the prosecution against him to that degree, that he was obliged to leave his business and family in Warwickshire for some time, and shelter himself in London.* The good old gossip Aubrey is wholly silent about the deer-stealing and the flight to London, merely saying, "This William, being inclined naturally to poetry and acting, came to London, I guess about eighteen." But there were other antiquarian gossips of Aubrey's age, who have left us their testimony upon this subject. The Reverend William Fulman, a fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, who died in 1688, bequeathed his papers to the Reverend Richard Davies of Sandford, Oxfordshire; and on the death of Mr. Davies, in 1707, these papers were deposited in the library of Corpus Christi. Fulman appears to have made some collections for the biography of our English poets, and under the name Shakspeare he gives the dates of his birth and death. But Davies, who added notes to his friend's manuscripts, affords us the following piece of information:—"He was much given to all unluckiness in stealing venison and rabbits; particularly from Sir Lucy, who had him oft whipped, and sometimes imprisoned, and at last made him fly his native country, to his great advancement. But his revenge was so great, that he is his Justice Clodpate, and calls him a great man, and that, in allusion to his name, bore three

* 'Some Account of the Life of William Shakespear,' written by Mr. Rowe.

louses rampant for his arms." The accuracy of this chronicler, as to events supposed to have happened a hundred years before he wrote, may be inferred from his correctness in what was accessible to him. Justice Clodpate is a new character; and the three louses rampant have diminished strangely from the "dozen white luces" of Master Slender. In Mr. Davies's account we have no mention of the ballad—through which, according to Rowe, the young poet revenged his "ill usage." But Capell, the editor of Shakspeare, found a new testimony to that fact: "The writer of his 'Life,' the first modern, [Rowe] speaks of a 'lost ballad,' which added fuel, he says, to the knight's before-conceived anger, and 'redoubled the prosecution;' and calls the ballad 'the first essay of Shakespeare's poetry: one stanza of it, which has the appearance of genuine, was put into the editor's hands many years ago by an ingenious gentleman (grandson of its preserver), with this account of the way in which it descended to him: Mr. Thomas Jones, who dwelt at Taibick, a village in Worcestershire, a few miles from Stratford-on-Avon, and died in the year 1703, aged upwards of ninety, remembered to have heard from several old people at Stratford the story of Shakespeare's robbing Sir Thomas Lucy's park; and their account of it agreed with Mr. Rowe's, with this addition—that the ballad written against Sir Thomas by Shakespeare was stuck upon his park-gate, which exasperated the knight to apply to a lawyer at Warwick to proceed against him. Mr. Jones had put down in writing the first stanza of the ballad, which was all he remembered of it, and Mr.

Thomas Wilkes (my grandfather) transmitted it to my father by memory, who also took it in writing." This, then, is the entire evidence as to the deer-stealing tradition. According to Rowe, the young Shakspeare was engaged more than once in robbing a park, for which he was prosecuted by Sir Thomas Lucy; he made a ballad upon his prosecutor, and then, being more severely pursued, fled to London. According to Davies, he was much given to all unluckiness in stealing venison and rabbits; for which he was often whipped, sometimes imprisoned, and at last forced to fly the country. According to Jones, the tradition of Rowe was correct as to robbing the park; and the obnoxious ballad being stuck upon the park-gate, a lawyer of Warwick was authorised to prosecute the offender. The tradition is thus full of contradictions upon the face of it. It necessarily would be so, for each of the witnesses speaks of circumstances that must have happened a hundred years before his time. We must examine the credibility of the tradition therefore by inquiring what was the state of the law as to the offence for which William Shakspeare is said to have been prosecuted; what was the state of public opinion as to the offence; and what was the position of Sir Thomas Lucy as regarded his immediate neighbours.

The law in operation at the period in question was the 5th of Elizabeth, chapter 21. The ancient forest-laws had regard only to the possessions of the Crown; and therefore in the 32nd of Henry VIII. an Act was passed for the protection of "every inheritor and possessor of manors, land, and tenements," which made

the killing of deer, and the taking of rabbits and hawks, felony. This Act was repealed in the 1st of Edward VI.; but it was quickly re-enacted in the 3rd and 4th of Edward VI. (1549 and 1550), it being alleged that unlawful hunting prevailed to such an extent throughout the realm, in the royal and private parks, that in one of the king's parks within a few miles of London five hundred deer were slain in one day. For the due punishment of such offences the taking of deer was again made felony. But the Act was again repealed in the 1st of Mary. In the 5th of Elizabeth it was attempted in Parliament once more to make the offence a capital felony. But this was successfully resisted; and it was enacted that, if any person by night or by day "wrongfully or unlawfully break or enter into any park empaled, or any other several ground closed with wall, pale, or hedge, and used for the keeping, breeding, and cherishing of deer, and so wrongfully hunt, drive, or chase out, or take, kill, or slay any deer within any such empaled park, or closed ground with wall, pale, or other enclosure, and used for deer, as is aforesaid," he shall suffer three months' imprisonment, pay treble damages to the party offended, and find sureties for seven years' good behaviour. But there is a clause in this Act (1562-3) which renders it doubtful whether the penalties for taking deer could be applied twenty years after the passing of the Act, in the case of Sir Thomas Lucy. "Provided always, That this Act, or anything contained therein, extend not to any park or enclosed ground hereafter to be made and used for deer, without the grant or licence of our Sovereign Lady the

Queen, her heirs, successors, or progenitors." At the date of this statute Charlcote, it is said, was not a deer-park; was not an enclosed ground royally licensed. For the space of forty-two years after the passing of this Act of Elizabeth there was no remedy for deer-stealing (except by action for trespass) in grounds not enclosed at the passing of that Act. The statute of the 3rd of James I. recites that for offences within such grounds there is no remedy provided by the Act of Elizabeth, or by any other Act. It appears to us, however, that Maloué puts the case against the tradition too strongly when he maintains that Charlcote was not a licensed park in 1562, and that, therefore, its venison continued to be unprotected till the statute of James. The Act of Elizabeth clearly contemplates any "several ground" "closed with wall, pale, or hedge, and used for the keeping of deer;" and as Sir Thomas Lucy built the mansion at Charlcote in 1558, it may reasonably be supposed that at the date of the statute the domain of Charlcote was closed with wall, pale, or hedge. The deer-stealing tradition, however, has grown more minute as it has advanced in age. Charlcote, according to Mr. Samuel Ireland, was not the place of Shakspeare's unlucky adventures. The Park of Fulbrooke, he says, was the property of Sir Thomas Lucy; and he gives us a drawing of an old house where the young offender was conveyed after his detection. Upon the Ordnance Map of our own day is the Deer Barn, where, according to the same veracious tradition, the venison was concealed. A word or two disposes of this part of the tradition: Fulbrooke did not come into the possession

of the Lucy family till the grandson of Sir Thomas purchased it in the reign of James I. We have seen, then, that for ten years previous to the passing of the Act of Elizabeth for the preservation of deer there had been no laws in force except the old forest-laws, which applied not to private property. The statute of Elizabeth makes the bird nesting boy, who climbs up to the hawk's eyrie, as liable to punishment as the deer-stealer. The taking of rabbits, as well as deer, was felony by the statutes of Henry VIII. and Edward VI.; but from the time of Henry VIII. to James I. there was no protection for rabbits; they were *feræ naturæ*. Our unhappy poet, therefore, could not be held to steal rabbits, however fond he might be of hunting them; and certainly it would have been legally unsafe for Sir Thomas Lucy to have whipped him for such a disposition. Pheasants and partridges were free for men of all condition to shoot with gun or cross-bow, or capture with hawk. There was no restriction against taking hares except a statute of Henry VIII., which, for the protection of hunting, forbade tracking them in the snow. With this general right of sport it is scarcely to be expected that the statute against the taking of deer should be very strictly observed by the bold yeomanry of the days of Elizabeth; or that the offence of a young man should have been visited by such severe prosecution as should have compelled him to fly the country. The penalty for the offence was a defined one. The short imprisonment might have been painful for a youth to bear, but it would not have been held disgraceful. All the writers of the Elizabethan period

speak of killing a deer with a sort of jovial sympathy, worthy the descendants of Robin Hood. "I'll have a buck till I die, I'll slay a doe while I live," is the maxim of the Host in 'The Merry Devil of Edmonton;' and even Sir John, the priest, reproves him not: he joins in the fun. With this loose state of public opinion, then, upon the subject of venison, is it likely that Sir Thomas Lucy would have pursued for such an offence the eldest son of an alderman of Stratford with any extraordinary severity? The knight was nearly the most important person residing in the immediate neighbourhood of Stratford. In 1578 he had been High Sheriff. At the period when the deer-stealing may be supposed to have taken place he was seeking to be member for the county of Warwick, for which he was returned in 1584. He was in the habit of friendly intercourse with the residents of Stratford, for in 1583 he was chosen as an arbitrator in a matter of dispute by Hamnet Sadler, the friend of John Shakspeare and of his son. All these considerations tend, we think, to show that the improbable deer-stealing tradition is based, like many other stories connected with Shakspeare, on that vulgar love of the marvellous which is not satisfied with the wonder which a being eminently endowed himself presents, without seeking a contrast of profligacy, or meanness, or ignorance in his early condition, amongst the tales of a rude generation who came after him, and, hearing of his fame, endeavoured to bring him as near as might be to themselves.

Charlcote, then, shall not, at least by us, be sur-

rounded by unpleasant associations in connexion with the name of Shakspeare. It is, perhaps, the most interesting locality connected with that name; for in its great features it is essentially unchanged. There stands, with slight alterations, and those in good taste, the old mansion as it was reared in the days of Elizabeth. A broad avenue leads to its great gateway, which opens into the court and the principal entrance. We would desire to people that hall with kindly inmates; to imagine the fine old knight, perhaps a little too jurisdictional, indeed, in his latter days, living there in peace and happiness with his family; merry as he ought to have been with his first wife, Jocosa (whose English name, Joyce, soundeth not quite so pleasant), whose epitaph, by her husband, is honourable alike to the deceased and to the survivor. We can picture him planting the second avenue, which leads obliquely across the park from the great gateway to the porch of the parish church. It is an avenue too narrow for carriages, if carriages then had been common: and the knight and his lady walk in stately guise along that grassy pathway, as the Sunday bells summon them to meet their humble neighbours in a place where all are equal. Charlote is full of rich woodland scenery. The lime-tree avenue may, perhaps, be of a later date than the age of Elizabeth; and one elm has evidently succeeded another from century to century. But there are old gnarled oaks and beeches dotted about the park. Its little knolls and valleys are the same as they were two centuries ago. The same Avon flows beneath the gentle elevation on which the house stands, sparkling

in the sunshine as brightly as when that house was first built. There may we still lie

“Under an oak, whose antique root peeps out
Upon the brook that brawls along this wood,”

and doubt not that there was the place to which

“A poor sequester’d stag,
That from the hunter’s aim had ta’en a hurt,
Did come to languish.”

There may we still see

“A careless herd,
Full of the pasture,”

leaping gaily along, or crossing the river at their own will in search of fresh fields and low branches whereon to browse. The village of Charlote is now one of the prettiest of objects. Whatever is new about it—and most of the cottages are new—looks like a restoration of what was old. The same character prevails in the neighbouring village of Hampton Lucy; and it may not be too much to assume that the memory of him who walked in these pleasant places in his younger days, long before the sound of his greatness had gone forth to the ends of the earth, has led to the desire to preserve here something of the architectural character of the age in which he lived.

In the sixteenth century young men married early. In the middle ranks there was little outfit required to begin housekeeping. A few articles of useful furniture satisfied their simple tastes; and we doubt not there was as much happiness seated on the wooden bench as now on the silken ottoman, and as light hearts tripped

over the green rushes as upon the Persian carpet. A silver bowl or two, a few spoons, constituted the display of the more ambitious; but for use the treen platter was at once clean and substantial, though the pewter dish sometimes graced a solemn merry-making. Employment, especially agricultural, was easily obtained by the industrious; and the sons of the yeomen, whose ambition did not drive them into the towns to pursue commerce, or to the universities to try for the prizes of professions, walked humbly and contentedly in the same road as their fathers had walked before them. They tilled a little land with indifferent skill, and their herds and flocks gave food and raiment to their household. Surrounded by the cordial intimacies of the class to which he belonged, it is not difficult to understand how William Shakspeare married early; and the very circumstance of his so marrying is tolerably clear evidence of the course of life in which he was brought up. It has been a sort of fashion of late years to consider that Shakspeare was clerk to an attorney. Thomas Nash in 1589 published this sentence: "It is a common practice now-a-days, among a sort of shifting companions, that run through every art and thrive by none, to leave the trade of *Noverint*, whereto they were born, and busy themselves with the endeavours of art, that could scarcely latinize their neck-verse if they should have need; yet English Seneca, read by candlelight, yields many good sentences, as *Bloud is a Deggar*, and so forth: and, if you entreat him fair in a frosty morning, he will afford you whole *Hamlets*, I should say handfuls, of tragical speeches." This

quotation is held to furnish the external evidence that Shakspeare had been an attorney, by the connexion here implied of "the trade of Noverint" and "whole Hamlets." Noverint was the technical beginning of a bond. It is imputed, then, by Nash, to a sort of shifting companions, that, running through every art and thriving by none, they attempt dramatic composition, drawing their tragical speeches from English Seneca. Does this description apply to Shakspeare? Was he thriving by no art? In 1589 he was established in life as a sharer in the Blackfriars Theatre. Does the use of the term "whole Hamlets" fix the allusion upon him? It appears to us only to show that some tragedy called 'Hamlet,' it may be Shakspeare's, was then in existence; and that it was a play also at which Nash might sneer as abounding with tragical speeches. But it does not seem to us that there is any absolute connexion between the Noverint and the Hamlet. The external evidence of this passage (and it is the only evidence of such a character that has been found) wholly fails, we think, in showing that Shakspeare was in 1589 reputed to have been an attorney. But had he pursued this occupation, either at Stratford or in London, it is tolerably clear that there would have been ample external evidence for the establishment of the fact. In those times an attorney was employed in almost every transaction between man and man, of any importance. Deeds, bonds, indentures, were much more common when legal documents were untaxed, and legal assistance was comparatively cheap. To every document attesting witnesses were numerous; and the attorney's clerk, as

a matter of course, was amongst the number. Such papers and parchments are better secured against the ravages of time than any other manuscripts. It is scarcely possible that, if Shakspeare had been an attorney's clerk, his name would not have appeared in some such document, as a subscribing witness.* No such signature has ever been found. This fact appears to us to dispose of Malone's confident belief that upon Shakspeare leaving school he was placed for two or three years in the office of one of the seven attorneys who practised in the Court of Record in Stratford. Malone adds, "The comprehensive mind of our poet, it must be owned, embraced almost every object of nature, every trade, and every art, the manners of every description of men, and the general language of almost every profession: but his knowledge and application of legal terms seem to me not merely such as might have been acquired by the casual observation of his all-comprehending mind; it has the appearance of technical skill; and he is so fond of displaying it on all occasions, that there is, I think, some ground for supposing that he was early initiated in at least the forms of law." Malone then cites a number of passages exemplifying Shakspeare's knowledge and application of legal terms. The theory was originally propounded

* Mr. Wheler, of Stratford, having taken up the opinion many years ago, upon the suggestion of Malone, that Shakspeare might have been in an attorney's office, has availed himself of his opportunities as a solicitor to examine hundreds of documents of Shakspeare's time, in the hope of discovering his signature. The examination was altogether fruitless.

by Malone in his edition of 1790 ; and it gave rise to many subsequent notes of the commentators, pointing out these technical allusions. The frequency of their occurrence, and the accuracy of their use, are, however, no proof to us that Shakspeare was professionally a lawyer. There is every reason to believe that the principles of law, especially the law of real property, were much more generally understood in those days than in our own. Educated men, especially those who possessed property, looked upon law as a science instead of a mystery ; and its terms were used in familiar speech instead of being regarded as a technical jargon. When Hamlet says, " This fellow might be in his time a great buyer of land, with his statutes, his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries," he employs terms with which every gentleman was familiar, because the owner of property was often engaged in a practical acquaintance with them. This general knowledge, which it would be very remarkable if Shakspeare had not acquired, involves the use of the familiar law-terms of his day, *fee simple, fine and recovery, entail, remainder, escheat, mortgage*. The commonest *practice* of the law, such as a sharp boy would have learnt in two or three casual attendances upon the Bailiff's Court at Stratford, would have familiarized Shakspeare very early with the words which are held to imply considerable technical knowledge—*action, bond, warrant, bill, suit, plea, arrest*. It must not be forgotten that the terms of law, however they may be technically applied, belong to the habitual commerce of mankind ; they are no abstract terms,

but essentially deal with human acts, and interests, and thoughts: and it is thus that, without any fanciful analogies, they more readily express the feelings of those who use them with a general significancy, than any other words that the poet could apply.

We hold, then, that William Shakspeare, the son of a possessor and cultivator of land, a gentleman by descent, married to the heiress of a good family, comfortable in his worldly circumstances, married very early the daughter of one in a similar rank of life, and in all probability did not quit his native place when he so married. The marriage-bond, which was discovered a few years since, has set at rest all doubt as to the name and residence of his wife. She is there described as Anne Hathwey, of Stratford, in the diocese of Worcester, maiden. Rowe, in his 'Life,' says—"Upon his leaving school he seems to have given entirely into that way of living which his father proposed to him; and in order to settle in the world, after a family manner, he thought fit to marry while he was yet very young. His wife was the daughter of one Hathaway, said to have been a substantial yeoman in the neighbourhood of Stratford." At the hamlet of Shottery, which is in the parish of Stratford, the Hathaways had been settled forty years before the period of Shakspeare's marriage; for in the Warwickshire Surveys, in the time of Philip and Mary, it is recited that John Hathaway held property at Shottery, by copy of court-roll, dated 20th of April, 34th of Henry VIII. (1543).* The Hathaway of Shakspeare's

* The Shottery property, which was called Hewland, remained with the descendants of the Hathaways till 1838.

time was named Richard; and the intimacy between him and John Shakspeare is shown by a precept in an action against Richard Hathaway, dated 1576, in which John Shakspeare is his bondman. Before the discovery of the marriage-bond Malone had found a confirmation of the traditional account that the maiden name of Shakspeare's wife was Hathaway; for Lady Barnard, the grand-daughter of Shakspeare, makes bequests in her will to the children of Thomas Hathaway, "her kinsman." But Malone doubts whether there were not other Hathaways than those of Shottery, residents in the town of Stratford, and not in the hamlet included in the parish. This is possible. But, on the other hand, the description in the marriage-bond of Anne Hathaway, as of Stratford, is no proof that she was not of Shottery; for such a document would necessarily have regard only to the parish of the person described. Tradition, always valuable when it is not opposed to evidence, has associated for many years the cottage of the Hathaways at Shottery with the wife of Shakspeare. Garrick purchased relics out of it at the time of the Stratford Jubilee; Samuel Ireland afterwards carried off what was called Shakspeare's courting-chair; and there is still in the house a very ancient carved bedstead, which has been handed down from descendant to descendant as an heirloom. The house was no doubt once adequate to form a comfortable residence for a substantial and even wealthy yeoman. It is still a pretty cottage, embosomed by trees, and surrounded by pleasant pastures; and here the young poet might have surrendered his prudence to his affections:—

"As in the sweetest buds
The eating canker dwells, so eating love
Inhabits in the finest wits of all."

The very early marriage of the young man, with one more than seven years his elder, has been supposed to have been a rash and passionate proceeding. Upon the face of it, it appears an act that might at least be reproved in the words which follow those we have just quoted:—

"As the most forward bud
Is eaten by the canker ere it blow,
Even so by love the young and tender wit
Is turn'd to folly; blasting in the bud,
Losing his verdure even in the prime,
And all the fair effects of future hopes."

This is the common consequence of precocious marriages; but we are not therefore to conclude that "the young and tender wit" of our Shakspeare was "turned to folly"—that his "forward bud" was "eaten by the canker"—that "his verdure" was lost "even in the prime," by his marriage with Anne Hathaway before he was nineteen. The influence which this marriage must have had upon his destinies was no doubt considerable; but it is too much to assume, as it has been assumed, that it was an unhappy influence. All that we *really* know of Shakspeare's family life warrants the contrary supposition. We believe that the marriage of Shakspeare was one of affection; that there was no disparity in the worldly condition of himself and the object of his choice; that it was with the consent of friends; that there were no circumstances connected with it which indicate that it was either forced or clandestine,

or urged on by an artful woman to cover her apprehended loss of character.

There is every reason to believe that Shakspeare was remarkable for manly beauty :—" He was a handsome, well-shaped man," says Aubrey. According to tradition, he played Adam in 'As You Like It,' and the Ghost in 'Hamlet.' Adam says,—

" Though I look old, yet I am strong and lusty."

Upon his personation of the Ghost, Mr. Campbell has the following judicious remarks :—" It has been alleged, in proof of his mediocrity, that he enacted the part of his own Ghost, in 'Hamlet.' But is the Ghost in 'Hamlet' a very mean character? No; though its movements are few, they must be awfully graceful; and the spectral voice, though subdued and half-mono-tonous, must be solemn and full of feeling. It gives us an imposing idea of Shakspeare's stature and mien to conceive him in this part. The English public, accustomed to see their lofty nobles, their *Essexes*, and their *Raleighs*, clad in complete armour, and moving under it with a majestic air, would not have tolerated the actor Shakspeare, unless he had presented an appearance worthy of the buried majesty of Denmark." That he performed *kingly* parts is indicated by these lines, written, in 1611, by John Davies, in a poem inscribed 'To our English Terence, Mr. William Shakespeare :—

" Some say, good Will, which I in sport do sing,

Hadst thou not play'd some *kingly* parts in sport,

Thou hadst been a companion for a king,

And been a king among the meaner sort."

The portrait by Martin Droeshout, prefixed to the edi-

tion of 1623, when Shakspeare would be well remembered by his friends, gives a notion of a man of remarkably fine features, independent of the wonderful development of forehead. The lines accompanying it, which bear the signature B. I. (most likely Ben Jonson), attest the accuracy of the likeness. The Bust at Stratford bears the same character. The sculptor was Gerard Johnson. It was probably erected soon after the poet's death; for it is mentioned by Leonard Digges, in his verses upon the publication of Shakspeare's collected works by his "pious fellows." All the circumstances of which we have any knowledge imply that Shakspeare, at the time of his marriage, was such a person as might well have won the heart of a mistress whom tradition has described as eminently beautiful. Anne Hathaway at this time was of mature beauty. The inscription over her grave in the church of Stratford-upon-Avon states that she died on "the 6th day of August, 1623, being of the age of 67 years." In November 1582, therefore, she would be of the age of twenty-six. This disparity of years between Shakspeare and his wife has been, we think, somewhat too much dwelt upon. Malone holds that "such a disproportion of age seldom fails at a subsequent period of life to be productive of unhappiness." Malone had, no doubt, in his mind the belief that Shakspeare left his wife wholly dependent upon her children,—a belief of which we were the first to show the utter groundlessness.* He suggests that in the 'Midsummer-Night's Dream' this disproportion is

* See Postscript to 'Twelfth Night,' Pictorial Edition, proving that Shakspeare's widow was provided for by dower.

alluded to, and he quotes a speech of *Lysander* in Act 1. Scene 1. of that play, not however giving the comment of *Hermia* upon it. The lines in the original stand thus :—

“ *Lys.* Ah me ! for aught that ever I could read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of ~~our~~ true love never did run smooth :
But either it was different in blood ;—

Her. O cross ! too high to be enthrall'd to low !

Lys. Or else *misgraffed*, in respect of years ;—

Her. O spite ! too old to be engag'd to young !

Lys. Or else it stood upon the choice of friends ;—

Her. O hell ! to choose love by another's eye !

Lys. Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it.”

Difference in blood, disparity of years, the choosing of friends, are opposed to sympathy in choice. But was Shakspeare's own case such as he would bear in mind in making *Hermia* exclaim, “ O spite ! *too old* to be engag'd to *young* ! ” ? The passage was in all probability written about ten years after his marriage, when his wife would still be in the prime of womanhood. When Mr. de Quincey,* therefore, connects the saying of Parson Evans with Shakspeare's early love,—“ I like not when a woman has a great peard,”—he scarcely does justice to his own powers of observation and his book-experience. The history of the most imaginative minds, probably of most men of great ability, would show that in the first loves, and in the early marriages, of this class, the choice has generally fallen upon women older than themselves, and this without any reference to inte-

* Life of Shakspeare, in the ‘ *Encyclopædia Britannica*. ’

rested motives. But Mr. de Quincey holds that Shakspeare, "looking back on this part of his youthful history from his maturest years, breathes forth pathetic counsels against the errors into which his own inexperience had been ensnared. The disparity of years between himself and his wife he notices in a beautiful scene of the 'Twelfth Night'." In this scene Viola, disguised as a page, a very boy, one of whom it is said—

"For they shall yet belie thy happy years
That say thou art a man,"—

is pressed by the Duke to own that his eye "hath stay'd upon some favour." Viola, who is enamoured of the Duke, punningly replies,—“A little, by your favour;” and being still pressed to describe the “kind of woman,” she says, of the Duke’s “complexion” and the Duke’s “years.” Any one who in the stage representation of the Duke should do otherwise than make him a grave man of thirty-five or forty, a staid and dignified man, would not present Shakspeare’s whole conception of the character. There would be a difference of twenty years between him and Viola. No wonder, then, that the poet should make the Duke dramatically exclaim,—

“*Too old, by Heaven!* Let still the woman take
An elder than herself; so wears she to him,
So sways she level in her husband’s heart.”

And wherefore?—

“For, boy, however we do praise ourselves,
Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,
More longing, wavering, sooner lost and worn,
Than women’s are.”

The pathetic counsels, therefore, which Shakspeare is here supposed to breathe in his maturer years, have

reference only to his own giddy and unfirm fancies. We are of opinion that, upon the general principle upon which Shakspeare subjects his conception of what is individually true to what is universally true, he would have rejected instead of adopted whatever was peculiar in his own experience, if it had been emphatically recommended to his adoption through the medium of his self-consciousness. Shakspeare wrote these lines at a time of life (about 1602) when a slight disparity of years between himself and his wife would have been a very poor apology to his own conscience that his affection could not hold the bent; and it certainly does happen, as a singular contradiction to his supposed "earnestness in pressing the point as to the *inverted* disparity of years, which indicates pretty clearly an appeal to the lessons of his personal experience,"* that at this precise period he should have retired from his constant attendance upon the stage, purchasing land in his native place, and thus seeking in all probability the more constant companionship of that object of his early choice of whom he is thus supposed to have expressed his distaste. It appears to us that this is a tolerably convincing proof that his affections could hold the bent, however he might dramatically and poetically have said,—

"Then let thy love be younger than thyself,
Or thy affection cannot hold the bent :
For women are as roses ; whose fair flower,
Being once display'd, doth fall that very hour."

The marriage-bond of Shakspeare, which may be seen in the Consistorial Court of Worcester, was first pub-

* 'Encyclopædia Britannica.'

lished by Mr. Wheler in 1836, having been previously discovered by Sir R. Phillips. It consists of a bond to the officers of the Ecclesiastical Court, in which Fulk Sandells, of the county of Warwick, farmer, and John Rychardson, of the same place, farmer, are bound in the sum of forty pounds, &c. It is dated the 28th day of November, in the 25th year of Elizabeth (1582). The date of this marriage-bond, and the date of the birth of Shakspeare's first child, have led to the belief that the marriage was forced upon a very young man by the friends of a woman whom he had injured. We believe that this is one of the cases in which we may fall into error by attempting to decide without knowing *all* the facts. We hold that the licence for matrimony, obtained from the Consistorial Court at Worcester, was a permission sought for under no extraordinary circumstances;—still less that the young man who was about to marry was compelled to urge on the marriage as a consequence of previous imprudence. We believe, on the contrary, that the course pursued was strictly in accordance with the customs of the time, and of the class to which Shakspeare belonged. The espousals before witnesses, we have no doubt, were then considered as constituting a valid marriage, if followed up within a limited time by the marriage of the Church; and these espousals might have taken place in Shakspeare's case, as in very many of the marriages of the middle classes of his time. However the Reformed Church might have endeavoured to abrogate this practice, it was unquestionably the ancient habit of the people. It was derived from the Roman law, the foundation of many

of our institutions. It prevailed for a long period without offence. It still prevails in the Lutheran Church. We are not to judge of the customs of those days by our own, especially if our inferences have the effect of imputing criminality where the most perfect innocence may have existed.

The course of Shakspeare's life for a year or so after his marriage cannot be followed with any accuracy. Aubrey says, "This William, being inclined naturally to poetry and acting, came to London, I guess about eighteen, and was an actor at one of the playhouses, and did act exceedingly well. Now Ben Jonson was never a good actor, but an excellent instructor. He began early to make Essays at Dramatic Poetry, which at that time was very low, and his plays took well." Thus writes honest Aubrey, in the year 1680, in his 'Minutes of Lives,' addressed to his "worthy friend, Mr. Anthony à Wood, Antiquary of Oxford." Of the value of Aubrey's evidence we may form some opinion from his own statement to his friend:—" 'T is a task that I never thought to have undertaken till you imposed it upon me, saying that I was fit for it by reason of my general acquaintance, having now not only lived above half a century of years in the world, but have also been much tumbled up and down in it; which hath made me so well known. Besides the modern advantage of coffeehouses in this great city, before which men knew not how to be acquainted but with their own relations or societies, I might add that I come of a longævous race, by which means I have wiped some feathers off the wings of time for several

generations, which does reach high." It must not be forgotten that Aubrey's account of Shakspeare, brief and imperfect as it is, is the earliest known to exist. His story of Shakspeare's coming to London is a simple and natural one, without a single marvellous circumstance about it:—"This William, being inclined naturally to poetry and acting, came to London." This, the elder story, appears to us to have much greater verisimilitude than Rowe's, the later:—"He was obliged to leave his business and family in Warwickshire for some time, and shelter himself in London." Aubrey, who has picked up all the gossip "of coffeehouses in this great city," hears no word of Rowe's story, which would certainly have been handed down amongst the traditions of the theatre to Davenant and Shadwell, from whom he does hear something:—"I have heard Sir William Davenant and Mr. Thomas Shadwell (who is counted the best comedian we have now) say, that he had a most prodigious wit." Neither does he say, nor indeed any one else till two centuries and a quarter after Shakspeare is dead, that, "after four years' conjugal discord, he would resolve upon that plan of solitary emigration to the metropolis, which, at the same time that it released him from the humiliation of domestic feuds, succeeded so splendidly for his worldly prosperity, and with a train of circumstances so vast for all future ages." * It is certainly a singular vocation for a writer of genius to bury the legendary scandals of the days of Rowe, for the sake of exhuming a new scandal, which cannot be received at all without the

* 'Encyclopædia Britannica.'

belief that the circumstance must have had a permanent and most evil influence upon the mind of the unhappy man who thus cowardly and ignominiously is held to have severed himself from his duty as a husband and a father. We cannot trace the evil influence, and therefore we reject the scandal. It has not even the slightest support from the weakest tradition. It is founded upon an imperfect comparison of two documents, judging of the habits of that period by those of our own day; supported by quotations from a dramatist of whom it would be difficult to affirm that he ever wrote a line which had strict reference to his own feelings and circumstances.

In the baptismal register of the parish of Stratford for 1583 is the entry of the baptism of Susanna on the 26th May. This record necessarily implies the residence of the wife of William Shakspeare in the parish of Stratford. Did he himself continue to reside in this parish? There is no evidence of his residence. His name appears in no suit in the Bailiff's Court at this period. He fills no municipal office, such as his father had filled before him. But his wife continues to reside in the native place of her husband, surrounded by his relations and her own. His father and his mother no doubt watch with anxious solicitude over the fortunes of their first son. He has a brother, Gilbert, seventeen years of age, and a sister of fourteen. His brother Richard is nine years of age; but Edmund is young enough to be the playmate of his little Susanna. On the 2nd February, 1585, there is another entry in the parochial register, of the baptism of Hamnet and

Judith, son and daughter to William Shakspeare. While he is yet a minor he is the father of three children. The circumstance of his minority may perhaps account for the absence of his name from all records of court-leet, or bailiff's court, or common-hall. He was neither a constable, nor an ale-conner, nor an overseer, nor a jury-man, because he was a minor. We cannot affirm that he did not leave Stratford before his minority expired; but it is to be inferred that, if he had continued to reside at Stratford after he was legally of age, we should have found traces of his residence in the records of the town. If his residence was out of the borough, as we have supposed his father's to have been at this period, some trace would yet have been found of him, in all likelihood, within the parish. Just before the termination of his minority we have an undeniable record that he was a second time a father within the parish. It is at this period, then, that we would place his removal from Stratford; his flight, according to the old legend; his solitary emigration, according to the new discovery. That his emigration was even solitary we have not a tittle of evidence. Rowe says that, after having settled in the world in a family manner, and continued in this kind of settlement for some time, the extravagance of which he was guilty in robbing Sir Thomas Lucy's park obliged him to leave his business and family. He could not have so left, even according to the circumstances which were known to Rowe, till after the birth of his son and daughter in 1585. But the story goes on:—"It is at this time, and upon this accident, that he is said to

have made his first acquaintance in the playhouse. He was received into the company then in being, at first in a very mean rank; but his admirable wit, and the natural turn of it to the stage, soon distinguished him, if not as an extraordinary actor, yet as an excellent writer." Sixty years after the time of Rowe the story assumed a more circumstantial shape, as far as regards the *mean rank* which Shakspeare filled in his early connexion with the theatre. Dr. Johnson adds one passage to the 'Life,' which he says "Mr. Pope related, as communicated to him by Mr. Rowe." It is so remarkable an anecdote that it is somewhat surprising that Rowe did not himself add it to his own meagre account:—

"In the time of Elizabeth, coaches being yet uncommon, and hired coaches not at all in use, those who were too proud, too tender, or too idle to walk, went on horseback to any distant business or diversion. Many came on horseback to the play; and when Shakspeare fled to London from the terror of a criminal prosecution, his first expedient was to wait at the door of the playhouse, and hold the horses of those that had no servants, that they might be ready again after the performance. In this office he became so conspicuous for his care and readiness, that in a short time every man as he alighted called for Will Shakspeare, and scarcely any other waiter was trusted with a horse while Will Shakspeare could be had. This was the first dawn of better fortune. Shakspeare, finding more horses put into his hand than he could hold, hired boys to wait under his inspection, who, when Will Shakspeare was summoned, were immediately to

present themselves—"I am Shakspeare's boy, Sir." In time, Shakspeare found higher employment; but as long as the practice of riding to the playhouse continued, the waiters that held the horses retained the appellation of Shakspeare's boys."

Steevens has attempted to impugn the credibility of this anecdote by saying,—“That it was once the general custom to ride on horseback to the play I am yet to learn. The most popular of the theatres were on the Bankside; and we are told by the satirical pamphleteers of that time that the usual mode of conveyance to these places of amusement was by water, but not a single writer so much as hints at the custom of riding to them, or at the practice of having horses held during the hours of exhibition.” Steevens is here in error; he has a vague notion—which is still persevered in with singular obstinacy, even by those who have now the means of knowing that Shakspeare had acquired property in the chief theatre in 1589—that the great dramatic poet had felt no inspiration till he was about eight-and-twenty, and that, therefore, his connexion with the theatre began in the palmy days of the Globe on the Bankside—a theatre not built till 1593. To the earlier theatres, if they were frequented by the gallants of the Court, they would have gone on horses. They did so go, as we learn from Dekker, long after the Bankside theatres were established. The story first appeared in a book entitled ‘The Lives of the Poets,’ considered to be the work of Theophilus Cibber, but said to be written by a Scotchman of the name of Shiels, who was an amanuensis of Dr. Johnson. Shiels

had certainly some hand in the book ; and there we find that Davenant told the anecdote to Betterton, who communicated it to Rowe, who told it to Pope, who told it to Dr. Newton. Improbable as the story is as it now stands, there may be a scintillation of truth in it, as in most traditions. It is by no means impossible that the Blackfriars Theatre might have had Shakspeare's boys to hold horses, but not Shakspeare himself. As a proprietor of the theatre, Shakspeare might sagaciously perceive that its interest would be promoted by the readiest accommodation being offered to its visitors ; and further, with that worldly adroitness which, in him, was not incompatible with the exercise of the highest genius, he might have derived an individual profit by employing servants to perform this office. In an age when horse-stealing was one of the commonest occurrences, it would be a guarantee for the safe charge of the horses that they were committed to the care of the agents of one then well known in the world,—an actor, a writer, a proprietor of the theatre. Such an association with the author of 'Hamlet' must sound most anti-poetical ; but the fact is scarcely less prosaic than that the same wondrous man, about the period when he wrote 'Macbeth,' had an action for debt in the Bailiff's Court at Stratford, to recover thirty-five shillings and tenpence for corn by him sold and delivered.

Familiar, then, with theatrical exhibitions, such as they were, from his earliest youth, and with a genius so essentially dramatic that all other writers that the world has seen have never approached him in his power of going out of himself, it is inconsistent with proba-

bility that he should not have attempted some dramatic composition at an early age. The theory that he was first employed in repairing the plays of others we hold to be altogether untenable; supported only by a very narrow view of the great essentials to a dramatic work,* and by verbal criticism, which, when carefully examined, utterly fails even in its own petty assumptions.* There can be no doubt that the three Parts of 'Henry VI.' belong to the early stage. We believe them to be wholly and absolutely the early work of Shakspeare. But we do not necessarily hold that they were his earliest work; for the proof is so clear of the continual improvements and elaborations which he made in his best productions, that it would be difficult to say that some of the plays which have the most finished air, but of which there were no early editions, may not be founded upon very youthful compositions. Others may have wholly perished; thrown aside after a season; never printed; and neglected by their author, to whom new inventions would be easier than remodellings of pieces probably composed upon a false theory of art. For it is too much to imagine that his first productions would be wholly untainted by the taste of the period. Some might have been weak delineations of life and character, overloaded with mythological conceits and pastoral affectations, like the plays of Lyly, which were the Court fashion before 1590. Others might have been prompted by the false ambition to produce effect, which is the characteristic of 'Lo-

* See our 'Essay on the Three Parts of Henry VI., and Richard III.,' in the Pictorial and Library editions.

crine,' and partially so of 'Titus Andronicus.' But of one thing we may be sure—that there would be no want of power even in his first productions; that real poetry would have gushed out of the bombast, and true wit sparkled amidst the conceits. His first plays would, we think, fall in with the prevailing desire of the people to learn the history of their country through the stage. If so, they would certainly not exhibit the feebleness of some of those performances which were popular about the period of which we are now speaking, and which continued to be popular even after he had most successfully undertaken

“To raise our ancient sovereigns from their hearse.”

The door of the theatre was not a difficult one for him to enter. It is a singular fact, that several of the most eminent actors of this very period are held to have been his immediate neighbours. We see no difficulty in believing that the first step taken by him in a decision as interesting to ages unborn as important to himself, was the experimental one of rendering his personal aid towards the proper performance of his first acted play. We inverse the usual belief in this matter. We think that Shakspeare became an actor because he was a dramatic writer, and not a dramatic writer because he was an actor. He very quickly made his way to wealth and reputation, not so much by a handsome person and pleasing manners, as by that genius which left all other competitors far behind him in the race of dramatic composition; and by that prudence which taught him to combine the exercise of his extraordinary powers with a constant reference to the course of life he had

chosen, not lowering his art for the advancement of his fortune, but achieving his fortune in showing what mighty things might be accomplished by his art.

Amongst those innumerable by-ways in London which are familiar to the hurried pedestrian, there is a well-known line of streets, or rather lanes, leading from the hill on which St. Paul's stands to the great thoroughfare of Blackfriars Bridge. Between Apothecaries' Hall and Printing-house Square is a short lane, leading into an open space called Playhouse Yard. It is one of those shabby places of which so many in London lie close to the glittering thoroughfares; but which are known only to their own inhabitants, and have at all times an air of quiet which seems like desolation. The houses of this little square, or yard, are neither ancient nor modern. Some of them were probably built soon after the great fire of London; for a few present their gable fronts to the streets, and the wide casements of others have evidently been filled up and modern sashes inserted. But there is nothing here, nor indeed in the whole precinct, with the exception of the few yards of ancient wall, that has any pretension to belong to what may be called the antiquities of London. In the heart of this precinct, close by the church of a suppressed monastery, surrounded by the new houses of the nobility, in the very spot which is now known as Playhouse Yard, was built, in 1575, the Blackfriars Theatre.

The history of the early stage, as it is to be deduced from statutes, and proclamations, and orders of council, exhibits a constant succession of conflicts between the

civic authorities and the performers of plays. The act of the 14th of Elizabeth, "for the punishment of vagabonds, and for relief of the poor and impotent," was essentially an act of protection for the established companies of players. We have here, for the first time, a definition of rogues and vagabonds; and it includes not only those who can "give no reckoning how he or she doth lawfully get his or her living," but "all fencers, bearwards, common players in interludes, and minstrels, not belonging to any baron of this realm, or towards any other honourable personage of greater degree; all jugglers, pedlers, tinkers, and petty chapmen; which said fencers, bearwards, common players in interludes, minstrels, jugglers, pedlers, tinkers, and petty chapmen, shall wander abroad, and have not licence of two justices of the peace at the least, whereof one to be of the quorum, where and in what shire they shall happen to wander." The circumstance of belonging to any baron, or person of greater degree, was in itself a pretty large exception; and if in those times of rising puritanism the licence of two justices of the peace was not always to be procured, the large number of companies enrolled as the servants of the nobility offers sufficient evidence that the profession of a player was not a persecuted one, but one expressly sanctioned by the ruling powers. There was one company of players, the Earl of Leicester's, which, within two years after the legislative protection of this act, received a more important privilege from the Queen herself. In 1574 a writ of privy seal was issued to the keeper of the great seal, commanding him to set forth letters patent addressed to

all justices, &c., licensing and authorizing James Burbage, and four other persons, servants to the Earl of Leicester, "to use, exercise, and occupy the art and faculty of playing comedies, tragedies, interludes, stage-plays, and such other like as they have already used and studied, or hereafter shall use and study, as well for the recreation of our loving subjects, as for our solace and pleasure, when we shall think good to see them." And they were to exhibit their performances "as well within our City of London and liberties of the same," as "throughout our realm of England." Without knowing how far the servants of the Earl of Leicester might have been molested by the authorities of the City of London, in defiance of this patent, it is clear that the patent was of itself insufficient to insure their kind reception within the city; for it appears that, within three months after the date of the patent, a letter was written from the Privy Council to the Lord Mayor, directing him "to admit the comedy-players within the city of London, and to be otherwise favourably used." This mandate was probably obeyed; but in 1575 the Court of Common Council, without any exception for the objects of the patent of 1574, made certain orders, in the city language termed an act, which assumed that the whole authority for the regulation of plays was in the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen; that they only could license theatrical exhibitions within the city; and that the players whom they did license should contribute half their receipts to charitable purposes. The civic authorities appear to have stretched their power somewhat too far; for in that very year James Burbage,

and the other servants of the Earl of Leicester, erected their theatre amidst the houses of the great in the Blackfriars, within a stone's throw of the city walls, but absolutely out of the control of the city officers. The immediate neighbours of the players were the Lord Chamberlain and Lord Hunsdon, as we learn from a petition against the players from the inhabitants of the precinct. The petition was unavailing. The rooms which it states "one Burbadge hath lately bought" were converted "into a common playhouse;" and within fourteen years from the period of its erection William Shakspeare was one of its proprietors.

The royal patent of 1574 authorized in the exercise of their art and faculty "James Burbadge, John Perkyn, John Lanham, William Johnson, and Robert Wilson," who are described as the servants of the Earl of Leicester. Although on the early stage the characters were frequently doubled, we can scarcely imagine that these five persons were of themselves sufficient to form a company of comedians. They had, no doubt, subordinate actors in their pay; they being the proprietors or shareholders in the general adventure. Of these five original patentees four remained as the "sharers in the Blackfriars Playhouse" in 1589, the name only of John Perkyn being absent from the subscribers to a certificate to the Privy Council that the company acting at the Blackfriars "have never given cause of displeasure in that they have brought into their plays matters of state and religion." This certificate—which bears the date of November, 1589—exhibits to us the list of the professional companions of Shakspeare in an early stage of his

career, though certainly not in the very earliest. The certificate describes the persons subscribing it as "her Majesty's popr players," and sets forth that they are "all of them sharers in the Blackfriars Playhouse." Their names are presented in the following order:—1. James Burbadge. 2. Richard Burbadge, 3. John Laneham. 4. Thomas Greene. 5. Robert Wilson. 6. John Taylor. 7. Anth. Wadeson. 8. Thomas Pope. 9. George Peele. 10. Augustine Phillipps. 11. Nicholas Towley. 12. William Shakspeare. 13. William Kempe. 14. William Johnson. 15. Baptiste Goodale. 16. Robert Armyrn.

It would not be an easy matter, without some knowledge of minute facts and a considerable effort of imagination, to form an accurate notion of that building in the Blackfriars—rooms converted into a common playhouse—in which we may conclude that the first plays of Shakspeare were exhibited. The very expression used by the petitioners against Burbage's project would imply that the building was not very nicely adapted to the purposes of dramatic representation. They say, "which rooms the said Burbage is now altering, and meaneth very shortly to convert and turn the same into a common playhouse." And yet we are not to infer that the rooms were hastily adapted to their object by the aid of a few boards and drapery, like the barn of a strolling company. In 1596 the shareholders say, in a petition to the Privy Council, that the theatre, "by reason of its having been so long built, hath fallen into great decay, and that, besides the reparation thereof, it has been found necessary to

make the same more convenient for the entertainment of auditories coming thereto." The structure, no doubt, was adapted to its object without any very great regard to durability; and the accommodations, both for actors and audience, were of a somewhat rude nature. The Blackfriars was a winter theatre; so that, differing from the Globe, which belonged to the same company, it was, there can be little doubt, roofed in. It appears surprising that, in a climate like that of England, even a summer theatre should be without a roof; but the surprise is lessened when we consider that, when the Globe was built, in 1594, not twenty years had elapsed since plays were commonly represented in the open yards of the inns of London. The Belle Savage was amongst the most famous of these inn-yard theatres; and even the present area of that inn will show how readily it might be adapted for such performances. The Blackfriars theatre was probably little more than a large space, arranged pretty much like the Belle Savage yard, but with a roof over it. Indeed, so completely were the public theatres adapted after the model of the temporary ones, that the space for the "groundlings" long continued to be called the yard. One of the earliest theatres, built probably about the same time as the Blackfriars, was called the Curtain, from which we may infer that the refinement of separating the actors from the audience during the intervals of the representation was at first peculiar to that theatre.

In the continuation of Stow's 'Chronicle,' by Edmund Howes, there is a very curious passage, which carries us back from the period in which he was writing

(1631) for sixty years. He describes the destruction of the Globe by fire in 1613, the burning of the Fortune Playhouse four years after, the rebuilding of both theatres, and the erection of "a new fair playhouse near the Whitefriars." He then adds,—“And this is the seventeenth stage, or common playhouse, which hath been new made within the space of threescore years within London and the suburbs, viz.: five inns, or common hosteleries, turned to playhouses, one Cockpit, St. Paul's singing-school, one in the Blackfriars, and one in the Whitefriars, which was built last of all, in the year one thousand six hundred twenty-nine. All the rest not named were erected only for common playhouses, besides the new-built Bear-garden, which was built as well for plays, and fencers' prizes, as bull-baiting; besides one in former time at Newington Butts. Before the space of threescore years abovesaid I neither knew, heard, nor read of any such theatres, set stages, or playhouses, as have been purposely built within man's memory.” It would appear, as far as we can judge from the very imperfect materials which exist, that in the early period of Shakspeare's connexion with the Blackfriars it was the only private theatre. It is natural to conclude that the proprietors of this theatre, being the Queen's servants, were the most respectable of their vocation; conformed to the ordinances of the state with the utmost scrupulousness; endeavoured to attract a select audience rather than an uncritical multitude; and received higher prices for admission than were paid at the public theatres. The performances at the Blackfriars were for the most part

in the winter. Whether the performances were in the day or evening, artificial lights were used. The audience in what we now call the pit (then also so called) sat upon benches, and did not stand, as in the yard open to the sky of the public playhouses. There were small rooms corresponding with the private boxes of existing theatres. A portion of the audience, including those who aspired to the distinction of critics, sat upon the stage. It is possible, and indeed there is some evidence, that the rate of admission varied according to the attraction of the performance; and we may be pretty sure that a company like that of Shakspeare's generally charged at a higher rate than the larger theatres, which depended more upon the multitude.

At an early period, but not so early as the date of the certificate of 1589, which shows that Shakspeare was a sharer in the company acting at the Blackfriars, he is mentioned by contemporaries. Henry Chettle is one of the very few persons who have left us any distinct memorial of Shakspeare. He appears to have had some connexion with the writers of his time, in preparing their manuscripts for the press. He so prepared Greene's posthumous tract, 'The Groat's-worth of Wit,' copying out the author's faint and blotted sheets, written on his sick-bed. In this pamphlet of Greene's an insult was offered to Shakspeare; and it would appear from the allusions of Chettle that he was justly offended. Marlowe, also, resented, as well he might, a charge of impiety which was levelled against him. Chettle says, "With neither of them that take offence was I acquainted." By acquaintance he means com-

panionship, if not friendship. He goes on, "And with one of them I care not if I never be." He is supposed here to point at Marlowe. But to the other he tenders an apology, in all sincerity: "The other, whom at that time I did not so much spare as since I wish I had, for that as I have moderated the heat of living writers, and might have used my own discretion (especially in such a case), the author being dead, that I did not I am as sorry as if the original fault had been my fault; because myself have seen his demeanour no less civil than he excellent in the quality he professes: besides, divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, that approves his art." In the Induction to 'Cynthia's Revels' Ben Jonson makes one of the personified spectators on the stage say, "I would speak with your author; where is he?" It may be presumed, therefore, that it was not uncommon for the author to mix with that part of the audience; and thus Henry Chettle may be good evidence of the civil demeanour of William Shakspeare. We may thus imagine the young author composedly moving amidst the throng of wits and critics that fill the stage. He moves amongst them modestly, but without any false humility. In worldly station, if such a consideration could influence his demeanour, he is fully their equal. They are for the most part, as he himself is, actors, as well as makers of plays. Phillips says Marlowe was an actor. Greene is reasonably conjectured to have been an actor. Peele and Wilson were actors of Shakspeare's own company; and so was Anthony Wadson.

There can be little doubt that upon the early stage the occupations for the most part went together. The dialogue was less regarded than the action. A plot was hastily got up, with rude shows and startling incidents. The characters were little discriminated; one actor took the tyrant line, and another the lover; and ready words were at hand for the one to rant with and the other to whine. The actors were not very solicitous about the words, and often discharged their mimic passions in extemporaneous eloquence. In a few years the necessity of pleasing more refined audiences changed the economy of the stage. Men of high talent sought the theatre as a ready mode of maintenance by their writings; but their connexion with the stage would naturally begin in acting rather than in authorship. The managers, themselves actors, would think, and perhaps rightly, that an actor would be the best judge of dramatic effect. The rewards of authorship through the medium of the press were in those days small indeed; and paltry as was the dramatist's fee, the players were far better paymasters than the stationers. To become a sharer in a theatrical speculation offered a reasonable chance of competence, if not of wealth. If a sharer existed who was "excellent" enough in "the quality" he professed to fill the stage creditably, and added to that quality "a facetious grace in writing," there is no doubt that with "uprightness of dealing" he would, in such a company as that of the Blackfriars, advance rapidly to distinction, and have the countenance and friendship of "divers of worship." Those of Shakspeare's early competitors who approached the

nearest to him in genius possessed not that practical wisdom which carried him safely and honourably through a life beset with some temptations. They knew not the value of "government and modesty." He lived amongst them, but we may readily conclude that he was not of them.

In the spring of 1588, and through the summer also, we may well believe that Shakspeare abided in London, whether or not he had his wife and children about him. The course of public events was such that he would scarcely have left the capital, even for a few weeks. For the hearts of all men in the vast city were mightily stirred; and whilst in that "shop of war" might be heard on every side the din of "anvils and hammers waking to fashion out the plates and instruments of armed justice,"* the poet had his own work to do, in urging forward the noble impulse through which the people, of whatever sect or whatever party, willed that they would be free. It was the year of the Armada.

But, glorious as was the contemplation of the attitude of England during this year, the very energy that had called forth this noble display of patriotic spirit exhibited itself in domestic controversy when the pressure from without was removed. The same season that witnessed the utter destruction of the armament of Spain saw London excited to the pitch of fury by polemical disputes. It was not now the quarrel between Protestant and Romanist, but between the National Church and Puritanism. The theatres, those new and powerful teachers, lent themselves to the controversy. In

* Milton: 'Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing.'

some of these their licence to entertain the people was abused by the introduction of matters connected with religion and politics ; so that in 1589 Lord Burghley not only directed the Lord Mayor to inquire what companies of players had offended, but a commission was appointed for the same purpose. How Shakspeare's company proceeded during this inquiry has been made out most clearly by the valuable document discovered at Bridgewater House by Mr. Collier, wherein they disclaim to have conducted themselves amiss. "These are to certify your Right Honourable Lordships that her Majesty's poor players, James Burbage, Richard Burbage, John Laneham, Thomas Greene, Robert Wilson, John Taylor, Anth. Wadeson, Thomas Pope, George Peele, Augustine Phillipps, Nicholas Towley, William Shakspeare, William Kempe, William Johnson, Baptiste Goodale, and Robert Armin, being all of them sharers in the Blackfriars playhouse, have never given cause of displeasure, in that they have brought into their plays matters of state and religion, unfit to be handled by them or to be presented before lewd spectators : neither hath any complaint in that kind ever been preferred against them or any of them. Wherefore they trust most humbly in your Lordships' consideration of their former good behaviour, being at all times ready and willing to yield obedience to any command whatsoever your Lordships in your wisdom may think in such case meet," &c.

"Nov. 1589."

In this petition, Shakspeare, a sharer in the theatre, but with others below him in the list, says, and they all say, that "they have never brought into their plays matters

of state and religion." The public mind in 1589-90 was furiously agitated by "matters of state and religion." A controversy was going on which is now known as that of *Martin Marprelate*, in which the constitution and discipline of the church were most furiously attacked in a succession of pamphlets; and they were defended with equal violence and scurrility. The theatres took part in the controversy, as we learn from a tract by Gabriel Harvey.

Shakspeare's great contemporary, Edmund Spenser, in a poem entitled 'The Tears of the Muses,' originally published in 1591, describes, in the 'Complaint' of Thalia, the Muse of Comedy, the state of the drama at the time in which he is writing:—

"Where be the sweet delights of learning's treasure,

That wont with com e sock to beautify

The painted theatres, and fill with pleasure

The listeners' eyes, and ears with melody;

In which I late was wont to reign as queen,

And mask in mirth with graces well beseen?

O! all is gone; and all that goodly glee,

Which wont to be the glory of gay wits,

Is laid a-bed, and nowhere now to see;

And in her room unseemly Sorrow sits,

With hollow brows and griesly countenance,

Marring my joyous gentle dalliance

And him beside sits ugly Barbarism,

And brutish Ignorance, ycrept of late

Out of dread darkness of the deep abysm,

Where being bred, he light and heaven does hate;

They in the minds of men now tyrannize,

And the fair scene with rudeness foul disguise.

All places they with folly have possess'd,

And with vain toys the vulgar entertain;

But me have banished, with all the rest
 That whilom wont to wait upon my train,
 Fine Counterfeisance, and unhurtful Sport,
 Delight, and Laughter, deck'd in seemly sort."

Spenser was in England in 1590-91, and it is probable that 'The Tears of the Muses' was written in 1590. The four stanzas which we have quoted are descriptive, as we think, of a period of the drama when it had emerged from the semi-barbarism by which it was characterized, "from the commencement of Shakspeare's boyhood, till about the earliest date at which his removal to London can be possibly fixed." * This description has nothing in common with those accounts of the drama which have reference to this "semi-barbarism." Nor does the writer of it belong to the school which considered a violation of the unities of time and place as the great defect of the English theatre. Nor does he assert his preference of the classic school over the romantic, by objecting, as Sir Philip Sidney objects, that "plays be neither right tragedies nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns." There had been, according to Spenser, a state of the drama that would

" Fill with pleasure
 The listeners' eyes, and ears with melody."

Can any comedy be named, if we assume that Shakspeare had, in 1590, not written any, which could be celebrated—and by the exquisite versifier of 'The Fairy Queen'—for its "melody"? Could any also be praised for

" That goodly glee
 Which wont to be the glory of gay wits" ?

* 'Edinburgh Review,' vol. lxxi., p. 469.

Could the plays before Shakspeare be described by the most competent of judges—the most poetical mind of that age next to Shakspeare—as abounding in

“ Fine Counterfesance, and unhurtful Sport,
Delight, and Laughter, deck'd in seemly sort ” ?

We have not seen such a comedy, except some three or four of Shakspeare's, which could have existed before 1590. We do not believe there is such a comedy from any other pen. What, according to the ‘Complaint’ of Thalia, has banished such comedy ? “Unseemly Sorrow,” it appears, has been fashionable ;—not the proprieties of tragedy, but a Sorrow

“ With *hollow brows* and *grievous* countenance ;”—

the violent scenes of blood which were offered for the excitement of the multitude, before the tragedy of real art was devised. But this state of the drama is shortly passed over. There is something more defined. By the side of this false tragic sit “ugly Barbarism and brutish Ignorance.” These are not the barbarism and ignorance of the *old* stage ;—they are

“ Ycrept of late

Out of dread darkness of the deep abyssm.”

They “*now* tyrannize ;” they now “disguise” the fair scene “with *rudeness*.” The Muse of Tragedy, Melpomene, had previously described the “rueful spectacles” of “the stage.” It was a stage which had no “true tragedy.” But it *had* possessed

“ Delight, and Laughter, deck'd in seemly sort.”

The four stanzas which we have quoted are immediately followed by these four others :—

“ All these, and all that else the comic stage
With season'd wit and goodly pleasure graced,

By which man's life in his likeliest image
 Was limned forth, are wholly now defaced;
 And those sweet wits, which wont the like to frame,
 Are now despis'd, and made a laughing game.

And he, the man whom Nature self had made
 To mock herself, and Truth to imitate,
 With kindly counter, under mimic shade,
 Our pleasant Willy, ah! is dead of late:
 With whom all joy and jolly merriment
 Is also dedded, and in dolour drent.

Instead thereof scoffing Scurrility,
 And scornful Folly, with Contempt, is crept,
 Rolling in rhymes of shameless ribaldry,
 Without regard or due decorum kept;
 Each idle wit at will presumes to make,
 And doth the Learned's task upon him take.

But that same gentle spirit, from whose pen
 Large streams of honey and sweet nectar flow,
 Scorning the boldness of such base-born men,
 Which dare their follies forth so rashly throw,
 Doth rather choose to sit in idle cell
 Than so himself to mockery to sell."

The love of personal abuse had driven out real comedy;
 and there was *one* who, for a brief season, had left the
 madness to take its course. We cannot doubt that

"He, the man whom Nature self had made
 To mock herself, and Truth to imitate,"

was *William Shakspeare*.

England was sorely visited by the plague in 1592
 and 1593. The theatres were shut; there were no per-
 formances at Court. Shakspeare, we may believe, during
 the long period of the continuance of the plague in
 London, had no occupation at the Blackfriars Theatre;
 and the pastimes of the Lord Chamberlain's servants
 were dispensed with at the palaces. It is probable that

he was residing at his own Stratford. The leisure, we think, afforded him opportunity of preparing the most important of that wonderful series of historical dramas which unquestionably appeared within a few years of this period; and of producing some other dramatic compositions of the highest order of poetical excellence. It appears to us, looking at the printed labours of Shakspeare at this exact period, that there was some pause in his professional occupation; and that many months' residence in Stratford, from the autumn of 1592 to the summer of 1593, enabled him more systematically to cultivate those higher faculties which placed him, even in the opinion of his contemporaries, at the head of the living poets of England.

It is easy to believe that if any external impulse were wanting to stimulate the poetical ambition of Shakspeare—to make him aspire to some higher character than that of the most popular of dramatists—such might be found in 1593 in the clear field which was left for the exercise of his peculiar powers. Robert Greene had died on the 3rd of September, 1592, leaving behind him a sneer at the actor who aspired “to bombast out a blank verse.” Had his genius not been destroyed by the wear and tear, and the corrupting influences, of a profligate life, he never could have competed with the mature Shakspeare. But as we know that “the only Shake-scene in a country,” at whom the unhappy man presumed to scoff, felt the insult somewhat deeply, so we may presume he took the most effectual means to prove to the world that he was not, according to the malignant insinuation of his envious compeer, “an upstart crow beautified with our feathers.” We believe

that in the gentleness of his nature, when he introduced into 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'

"The thrice three Muses mourning for the death
Of learning late deceas'd in beggary,"

he dropped a tear upon the grave of Greene, whose demerits were to be forgiven in his misery. On the 1st of June, 1593, Christopher Marlowe perished in a wretched brawl, "slain by Francis Archer," as the Register of Burials of the parish of St. Nicholas, Deptford, informs us. Who was left of the dramatists that could enter into competition with William Shakspeare, such as he then was? He was almost alone. The great disciples of his school had not arisen. Jonson had not appeared to found a school of a different character. It was for him, thenceforth, to sway the popular mind after his own fashion; to disregard the obligation which the rivalry of high talent might have imposed upon him of listening to other suggestions than those of his own lofty art; to make the multitude bow before that art, rather than that it should accommodate itself to their habits and prejudices. But at a period when the exercise of the poetical power in connexion with the stage was scarcely held amongst the learned and the polite in itself to be poetry, Shakspeare vindicated his reputation by the publication of the 'Venus and Adonis.' It was, he says, "the first heir of my invention." There may be a doubt whether Shakspeare meant to say literally that this was the first poetical work that he had produced; or whether he held, in deference to some critical opinions, that his dramatic productions could not be classed amongst the heirs of "invention." We think that he meant to use the words literally; and

that he used them at a period when he might assume, without vanity, that he had taken his rank amongst the poets of his time. He dedicates to the Earl of Southampton something that had not before been given to the world. He calls his verses "unpolished lines;" he vows to take advantage of all idle hours till he had honoured the young patron of the Muses with "some graver labour." But *invention* was received then, as it was afterwards, as the highest quality of the poet. Dryden says,—“A poet is a maker, as the word signifies; and he who cannot make, that is *invent*, hath his name for nothing.” We consider, therefore, that “my invention” is not the language of one unknown to fame. He was exhibiting the powers which he possessed upon a different instrument than that to which the world was accustomed; but the world knew that the power existed. We employ the word *genius* always with reference to the inventive or creative faculty. Substitute the word *genus* for invention, and the expression used by Shakspeare sounds like arrogance. But the substitution may indicate that the actual expression could not have been used by one who came forward for the first time to claim the honours of the poet. It has been argued from this expression that Shakspeare had produced nothing original before the ‘Venus and Adonis’—that up to the period of its publication, in 1593, he was only a repairer of the works of other men. We hold that the expression implies the direct contrary.

We have a distinct record when the theatres were re-opened after the plague. The ‘Diary’ of Philip Henslowe records that “the Earl of Sussex his men” acted ‘Huon of Bordeaux’ on the 28th of December,

1593. Henslowe appears to have had an interest in this company. It is probable that Shakspeare's theatre of the Blackfriars was opened about the same period. We have some evidence to show what was the duration of the winter season at this theatre; for the same diary shows that from June, 1594, the performances of the theatre at Newington Butts were a joint undertaking by the Lord Admiral's men and the Lord Chamberlain's men. How long this association of two companies lasted is not easy to determine; but during the month of June we have entries of the exhibition of 'Andronicus,' of 'Hamlet,' and of 'The Taming of a Shrew.' No subsequent entries exhibit the names of plays which have any real or apparent connexion with Shakspeare. It appears that in December, 1593, Richard Burbage entered into a bond with Peter Streete, a carpenter, for the performance on the part of Burbage of the covenants contained in an indenture of agreement by which Streete undertook to erect a new theatre for Burbage's company. This was the famous Globe on the Bankside, of which Shakspeare was unquestionably a proprietor. We thus see that in 1594 there were new demands to be made upon his invention; and we may reasonably conclude that the reliance of Burbage and his other fellows upon their poet's unequalled powers was one of their principal inducements to engage in this new enterprise.

In the midst of his professional engagements, which doubtless were renewed with increased activity after their long suspension, Shakspeare published his 'Rape of Lucrece.' He had vowed to take advantage of all idle hours till he had honoured Lord Southampton

with some graver labour than the first heir of his invention. The 'Venus and Adonis' was entered in the Registers of the Stationers' Company on the 18th of April, 1593. The 'Lucrece' appears in the same Registers on the 9th of May, 1594. That this elaborate poem was wholly or in part composed in that interval of leisure which resulted from the shutting of the theatres in 1593 may be reasonably conjectured; but it is evident that during the year which had elapsed between the publication of the first and the second poem, Shakspeare had been brought into more intimate companionship with his noble patron. The language of the first dedication is that of distant respect, the second is that of grateful friendship. At the period when Shakspeare dedicated to him his 'Venus and Adonis' Lord Southampton was scarcely twenty years of age. He is supposed to have become intimate with Shakspeare from the circumstance that his mother had married Sir Thomas Heneage, who filled the office of Treasurer of the Chamber, and in the discharge of his official duties would be brought into frequent intercourse with the Lord Chamberlain's players. This is Drake's theory. The more natural belief appears to be that he had a strong attachment to literature, and, with the generous impetuosity of his character, did not regard the distinctions of rank to the extent with which they were regarded by men of colder temperaments and more worldly minds. Shakspeare appears to have been the first amongst the writers of his day that offered a public tribute to the merits of the young nobleman. Both the dedications, and especially that of 'Lucrece,' are conceived in a modest and a manly spirit, entirely

different from the ordinary language of literary adulation. There is evidence in the second dedication of a higher sort of intercourse between the two minds than consists with any forced adulation of any kind, and especially with any extravagant compliments to the learning and to the abilities of a superior in rank. Such testimonies are always suspicious; and probably honest old Florio, when he dedicated his 'World of Words' to the Earl in 1598, shows pretty correctly what the race of panegyrists expected in return for their compliments: "In truth, I acknowledge an entire debt, not only of my best knowledge, but of all; yea of more than I know, or can, to your bounteous lordship, in whose pay and patronage I have lived some years; to whom I owe and vow the years I have to live. But, as to me, and many more, the glorious and gracious sunshining of your honour hath infused light and life." There is an extraordinary anecdote told by Rowe of Lord Southampton's munificence to Shakspeare, which seems to bring the poet somewhat near to Florio's plain-speaking association of pay and patronage:—"What grace soever the Queen conferred upon him, it was not to her only he owed the fortune which the reputation of his wit made. He had the honour to meet with many great and uncommon marks of favour and friendship from the Earl of Southampton, famous in the histories of that time for his friendship to the unfortunate Earl of Essex. It was to that noble lord that he dedicated his poem of 'Venus and Adonis.' There is one instance so singular in the magnificence of this patron of Shakspeare's, that if I had not been assured that the story was handed down by Sir William D'Avenant, who

was probably very well acquainted with his affairs, I should not have ventured to have inserted; that my Lord Southampton at one time gave him a thousand pounds, to enable him to go through with a purchase which he heard he had a mind to. A bounty very great, and very rare at any time, and almost equal to that profuse generosity the present age has shown to French dancers and Italian singers." This is one of the many instances in which we are not warranted in rejecting a tradition, however we may look suspiciously upon the accuracy of its details. D'Avenant could scarcely be very well acquainted with Shakspeare's affairs, for he was only ten years old when Shakspeare died. The sum mentioned as the gift of the young nobleman to the poet is so large, looking at the value of money in those days, that it could scarcely consist with the independence of a generous spirit to bear the load of such a prodigality of bounty. The notions of those days were, however, different from ours. Examples will readily suggest themselves of the most lavish rewards bestowed by princes and nobles upon great painters. They received such gifts without any compromise of their intellectual dignity. It was the same then with poets. According to the habits of the time Shakspeare might have received a large gift from Lord Southampton, without any forfeiture of his self-respect. Nevertheless, Rowe's story must still appear sufficiently apocryphal: "My Lord Southampton at one time gave him a thousand pounds, to enable him to go through with a purchase which he heard he had a mind to." It is not necessary to account for the gradual acquisition of property by Shakspeare that we should

yield our assent to this tradition, without some qualification. In 1582, when Lord Southampton was a lad at College, Shakspeare had already acquired that property which was to be the foundation of his future fortune. He was then a shareholder in the Blackfriars Theatre. That the adventure was a prosperous one, not only to himself but to his brother shareholders, may be inferred from the fact that four years afterwards they began the building of another theatre. The Globe was commenced in December, 1598; and being constructed for the most part of wood, was ready to be opened, we should imagine, in the summer of 1594. In 1596 the same prosperous company were prepared to expend considerable sums upon the repair and extension of their original theatre, the Blackfriars. The name of Shakspeare occupies a prominent position in the document from which we collect this fact: it is a petition to the Lords of the Privy Council from "Thomas Pope, Richard Burbadge, John Hemings, Augustine Philips, William Shakespeare, William Kempe, William Slye, Nicholas Tooley, and others, servants to the Right Honorable the Lord Chamberlain to her Majesty;" and it sets forth that they are "the owners and players of the private theatre in the Blackfriars; that it hath fallen into decay; and that it has been found necessary to make the same more convenient for the entertainment of auditories coming thereto." It then states what is important to the present question:—"To this end your petitioners have all and each of them put down sums of money according to their shares in the said theatre, and which they have justly and honestly gained by the exercise of their quality of stage-players." It then

alleges that certain inhabitants of the precinct had besought the Council not to allow the said private house to remain open, "but hereafter to be shut up and closed, to the manifest and great injury of your petitioners, who have no other means whereby to maintain their wives and families, but by the exercise of their quality as they have heretofore done." The common proprietorship of the company in the Globe and Blackfriars is also noticed:—"In the summer season your petitioners are able to play at their new-built house on the Bankside, called the Globe, but in the winter they are compelled to come to the Blackfriars." If the winter theatre be shut up, they say they will be "unable to practise themselves in any plays or interludes when called upon to perform for the recreation and solace of her Majesty and her honourable Court, as they have been heretofore accustomed." Though the Registers of the Council and the Office-books of the Treasurer of the Chamber are wanting for this exact period, we have here the distinct evidence of the intimate relation between Shakspeare's company and the Court. The petitioners, in concluding by the prayer that their "honourable Lordships will grant permission to finish the reparations and alterations they have begun," add as a reason for this favour that they "have hitherto been well ordered in their behaviour and just in their dealings." The performances at the Blackfriars went on without interruption. Shakspeare, in 1597, bought "all that capital messuage or tenement in Stratford called the New Place." This appears to have been his first investment in property distinct from his theatrical speculations. The purchase of the best

house in his native town, at a period of his life when his professional occupations could have allowed him little leisure to reside in it, would appear to have had in view an early retirement from a pursuit which probably was little agreeable to him. His powers as a dramatic writer might be profitably exercised without being associated with the actor's vocation. We know from other circumstances that at this period Stratford was nearest to his heart. On the 24th of January, 1598, Mr. Abraham Sturley, an alderman of Stratford, writes to his brother-in-law, Richard Quiney, then in London :—" I would write nothing unto you now—but come home. I pray God send you comfortably home. This is one special remembrance, from your father's motion. It seemeth by him that our countryman Mr. Shakspeare is willing to disburse some money upon some odd yard land or other at Shottery, or near about us. He thinketh it a very fit pattern to move him to deal in the matter of our tithes. By the instructions you can give him thereof, and by the friends he can make therefore, we think it a fair mark for him to shoot at, and not impossible to hit. It obtained, would advance him indeed, and would do us much good." We thus see that in a year after the purchase of New Place, Shakspeare's accumulation of money was going on. The worthy alderman and his connexions appear to look confidently to their countryman, Mr. Shakspeare, to assist them in their needs. On the 4th of November, in the same year, Sturley again writes a very long letter "to his most loving brother Mr. Richard Quiney, at the Bell, in Carter Lane, in London," in which he says of a letter written

by Quiney to him on the 21st of October, that it imported, amongst other matters, "that our countryman Mr. W. Shakspeare would procure us money; which I well like of, as I shall hear when, and where, and how; and I pray let not go that occasion, if it may sort to any indifferent conditions." Quiney himself at this very time writes the following characteristic letter to his "loving good friend and countryman, Mr. William Shakspeare:"—"Loving countryman, I am bold of you as of a friend, craving your help with thirty pounds upon Mr. Bushell and my security, or Mr. Myttens with me. Mr. Rosswell is not come to London as yet, and I have especial cause. You shall friend me much in helping me out of all the debts I owe in London, I thank God, and much quiet to my mind which would not be indebted. I am now towards the Court in hope your answer for the dispatch of my business. You shall neither lose credit nor money by me, the Lord willing; and now but persuade yourself so as I hope, and you shall not need to fear but with all hearty thankfulness I will hold my time, and content your friend, and if we bargain farther, you shall be the paymaster yourself. My time bids me to hasten to an end, and so I commit this to your care and hope of your help. I fear I shall not be back this night from the Court. Haste. The Lord be with you and with us all. Amen. From the Bell in Carter Lane, the 25th October, 1598. Yours in all kindness, Ryc. Quiney." The anxious dependence which these honest men appear to have upon the good offices of their townsman is more satisfactory even than the

evidence which their letters afford of his worldly condition.

In the midst of this prosperity the registers of the parish of Stratford-upon-Avon present to us an event which must have thrown a shade over the brightest prospects. The burial of the only son of the poet is recorded in 1596. Hamnet was born on the 2nd of February, 1585; so that at his death he was eleven years and six months old. He was a twin child; and it is not unlikely that he was constitutionally weak. Some such cause interfered probably with the education of the twin-sister Judith; for whilst Susanna, the elder, is recorded to have been "witty above her sex," and wrote a firm and vigorous hand, as we may judge from her signature to a deed in 1639, the mark of Judith appears as an attesting witness to a conveyance in 1611.

With the exception of this inevitable calamity, the present period may probably be regarded as a happy epoch in Shakspeare's life. He had conquered any adverse circumstances by which his earlier career might have been impeded. He had taken his rank among the first minds of his age; and, above all, his pursuits were so engrossing as to demand a constant exercise of his faculties, and to demand that exercise in the cultivation of the highest and the most pleasurable thoughts. This was the period to which belong the great histories of 'Richard II.,' 'Richard III.,' and 'Henry IV.,' and the delicious comedies of the 'Merchant of Venice,' 'Much Ado about Nothing,' and 'Twelfth Night.' These productions afford the most abundant evidence that the greatest of intellects was in the most healthful

possession of its powers. These were not hasty adaptations for the popular appetite, as we may well believe some of the earlier plays were in their first shape; but highly-wrought performances, to which all the method of his cultivated art had been strenuously applied. It was at this period that the dramatic poet appears not to have been satisfied with the applause of the Globe or the Blackfriars, or even with the gracious encouragements of a refined Court. During three years he gave to the world careful editions of some of these plays, as if to vindicate the drama from the pedantic notion that the Muses of tragedy and comedy did not meet their sisters upon equal ground. 'Richard II.' and 'Richard III.' were published in 1597; 'Love's Labour's Lost,' and 'Henry IV., Part I.,' in 1598; 'Romeo and Juliet,' corrected and augmented, in 1599; 'Henry IV., Part II.,' the 'Merchant of Venice,' 'A Midsummer Night's Dream,' and 'Much Ado about Nothing,' in 1600. The system of publication then ceased. It no doubt interfered with the interests of his fellows; and Shakspeare was not likely to assert an exclusive interest, or to gratify an exclusive pride, at the expense of his associates. But his reputation was higher than that of any other man, when only four of his plays were accessible to the *readers* of poetry. In 1598 it was proclaimed, not timidly or questionably, that "as Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for tragedy and comedy among the Latins, so Shakespeare, among the English, is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage:" and "As the soul of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweet witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare." It was

certainly not at this period of Shakspeare's life that he wrote, with reference to himself, unlocking his heart to some nameless friend :—

“ When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweepe my outcast state.”

Sonnets of Shakspeare were in existence in 1598, when Meres tells us of “his sugared sonnets among his private friends.” We do not receive these Sonnets altogether as evidences of Shakspeare's personal history or feelings. We believe that the order in which they were printed is an arbitrary one ; that some form a continuous poem or poems, that others are isolated in their subjects and the persons to whom they are addressed ; that some may express the poet's personal feelings, that others are wholly fictitious, dealing with imaginary loves and jealousies, and not attempting to separate the personal identity of the artist from the sentiments which he expressed, and the situations which he delineated. We believe that, taken as works of art, having a certain degree of continuity, the Sonnets of Spenser, of Daniel, of Drayton, of Shakspeare, although in many instances they might shadow forth real feelings and be outpourings of the inmost heart, were presented to the world as exercises of fancy, and were received by the world as such. Even of those portions of these remarkable lyrics which appear to have an obvious reference to the poet's feelings and circumstances, we cannot avoid rejecting the principle of continuity ; for they clearly belong to different periods of his life, if they are the reflection of his real sentiments. We have the playfulness of an early love, and the agonizing throes of an unlawful passion. They speak of a period when the writer had

won no honour or substantial rewards—"in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes," the period of his youth, if the allusion was at all real; and yet the writer is

"With time's injurious hand crush'd and o'erworn."

One little dedicatory poem says,

"Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage
Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,
To thee I send this written embassy,
To witness duty, not to show my wit."

Another (and it is distinctly associated with what we hold to be a continued little poem, wholly fictitious, in which the poet dramatizes as it were the poetical character) boasts that

"Not marble, not the gilded monuments
Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme."

Without attempting therefore to disprove that these Sonnets were addressed to the Earl of Southampton, or to the Earl of Pembroke, we must leave the reader who fancies he can find in them a shadowy outline of Shakspeare's life to form his own conclusion from their careful perusal. They want unity and consistency too much to be received as credible illustrations of this life. The 71st to the 74th Sonnets seem bursting from a heart oppressed with a sense of its own unworthiness, and surrendered to some overwhelming misery. There is a line in the 74th which points at suicide. We cling to the belief that the sentiments here expressed are essentially dramatic. In the 32nd Sonnet, where we recognise the man Shakspeare speaking in his own modest and cheerful spirit, death is to come across his "*well-contented day*." We must place one sentiment in opposition to the other, and then the effect is neu-

tralized. The opinion which we have formed of the probable admixture of the artificial and the real in the Sonnets, arising from their supposed original fragmentary state, necessarily leads to the belief that some are accurate illustrations of the poet's situation and feelings. It is collected from these Sonnets, for example, that his profession as a player was disagreeable to him; and this complaint is found amongst those portions which may be separated from the series of verses which appear to us to be written in an artificial character. It might be addressed to any one of his family, or some honoured friend, such as Lord Southampton:—

“O, for my sake do you with Fortune chide,
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
That did not better for my life provide
Than public means, which public manners breeds.
Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand.”

But if from his professional occupation his nature was felt by him to be subdued to what it worked in,—if thence his name received a brand,—if vulgar scandal sometimes assailed him,—he had high thoughts to console him, such as were never before imparted to mortal. This was probably written in some period of dejection, when his heart was ill at ease, and he looked upon the world with a slight tinge of indifference, if not of dislike. Every man of high genius has felt something of this. It was reserved for the highest to throw it off, “like dew-drops from the lion's mane.” But the profound self-abasement and despondency of the 74th Sonnet, exquisite as the diction is, appear to us unreal, as a representation of the mental

state of William Shakspeare; written, as it most probably was, at a period of his life when he revels and luxuriates (in the comedies which belong to the close of the sixteenth century) in the spirit of enjoyment, gushing from a heart full of love for his species, at peace with itself and with all the world.

About the close of the year 1599, the Blackfriars Theatre was remarkable for the constant presence of two men of high rank, who were there seeking amusement and instruction as some solace for the bitter mortifications of disappointed ambition. "My Lord Southampton and Lord Rutland came not to the Court; the one doth but very seldom; they pass away the time in London merely in going to plays every day."* Essex had arrived from Ireland on the 28th of September, 1599—not

"Bringing rebellion broached on his sword,"—

not surrounded with swarms of citizens who

"Go forth, and fetch their conquering Cæsar in,"—

but a fugitive from his army; one who in his desire for peace had treated with rebels, and had brought down upon him the censures of the Court; one who knew that his sovereign was surrounded with his personal enemies, and who in his reckless anger once thought to turn his army homeward to compel justice at their hands; one who at last rushed alone into the Queen's presence, "full of dirt and mire," and found that he was in the toils of his foes. From that Michaelmas till the 26th of August, 1600, Essex was in the custody

* Letter of Rowland Whyte to Sir Robert Sydney, in the 'Sydney Papers.'

of the Lord Keeper; in free custody as it was termed, but to all intents a prisoner. It was at this period that Southampton and Rutland passed "away the time in London merely in going to plays every day." Southampton, in 1598, had married Elizabeth Vernon, a cousin of Lord Essex. The marriage was without the consent of the Queen; and therefore Southampton was under the ban of the Court, having been peremptorily dismissed by Elizabeth from the office to which Essex had appointed him in the expedition to Ireland. Rutland was also connected with Essex by family ties, having married the daughter of Lady Essex, by her first husband, the accomplished Sir Philip Sidney. The season when these noblemen sought recreation at the Theatre was one therefore of calamity to themselves, and to the friend who was at the head of their party in the state. At Shakspeare's theatre there were at this period abundant materials for the highest intellectual gratification. Of Shakspeare's own works we know that at the opening of the seventeenth century there were twenty plays in existence. Thirteen (considering 'Henry IV.' as two parts) are recorded by Meres in 1598; 'Much Ado About Nothing,' and 'Henry V.' (not in Meres' list), were printed in 1600; and we have to add the three parts of 'Henry VI.,' 'The Taming of the Shrew,' and the original 'Hamlet,' which are also wanting in Meres' record, but which were unquestionably produced before this period. We cannot with extreme precision fix the date of any novelty from the pen of Shakspeare when Southampton and Rutland were amongst his daily auditors; but there is every reason to believe that 'As You Like It'

belongs as nearly as possible to this exact period. It is pleasant to speculate upon the tranquillizing effect that might have been produced upon the minds of the banished courtiers by the exquisite philosophy of this most delicious play. It is pleasant to imagine Southampton visiting Essex in the splendid prison of the Lord Keeper's house, and there repeating to him from time to time those lessons of wisdom that were to be found in the woods of Arden. We could almost slide into the belief that 'As You Like It' had an especial reference to the circumstances in which Essex and Southampton were placed in the spring of 1600. There is nothing desponding in its tone, nothing essentially misanthropical in its philosophy. Jaques stands alone in his railing against mankind. The healing influences of nature fall sweetly and fruitfully upon the exiled Duke and his co-mates. But, nevertheless, the ingratitude of the world is emphatically dwelt upon, even amidst the most soothing aspects of a pure and simple life "under the greenwood tree."

The period at which Essex fell upon the block, and Southampton was under condemnation, must have been a gloomy period in the life of Shakspeare. The friendship of Southampton in all likelihood raised the humble actor to that just appreciation of himself which could alone prevent his nature being subdued to what it worked in. There had been a compromise between the inequality of rank and the inequality of intellect, and the fruit had been a continuance and a strengthening of that "love" which seven years earlier had been described as "without end." Those ties were now broken by calamity. The accomplished noble, a prisoner

looking daily for death, could not know the depth of the love of his "especial friend."* He was beyond the reach of any service that this friend could render him. All was gloom and uncertainty. It has been said, and we believe without any intention to depreciate the character of the great poet, that "There seems to have been a period of Shakspeare's life when his heart was ill at ease, and ill content with the world or his own conscience; the memory of hours mis-spent, the pang of affection misplaced or unrequited, the experience of man's worse nature, which intercourse with ill-chosen associates, by choice or circumstance, peculiarly teaches;—these, as they sank down into the depths of his great mind, seem not only to have inspired into it the conception of *Lear* and *Timon*, but that of one primary character, the censurer of mankind."† The genius of Shakspeare was so essentially dramatic, that neither *Lear*, nor *Timon*, nor *Jaques*, nor the Duke in '*Measure for Measure*,' nor *Hamlet*, whatever censure of mankind they may express, can altogether be held to reflect "a period of Shakspeare's life when his heart was ill at ease, and ill content with the world." That period is referred to the beginning of the seventeenth century, to which the plays belong that are said to exhibit these attributes.‡ But from this period there is certainly a more solemn cast of thought in all the works of the great poet. The influence of time in the

* The expression is used by Southampton in his letter to Lord Ellesmere introducing Shakspeare and Burbage in 1608. See Collier's '*New Facts*,' p. 33.

† Hallam's '*Literature of Europe*,' vol. iii., p. 568.

‡ Mr. Hallam refers to '*Hamlet*' in its altered form.

formation and direction of the poetical power must yet be taken into account, as well as any temper arising out of passing events. Shakspeare was now thirty-seven years of age. He had attained to the consciousness of his own intellectual strength, and he had acquired by long practice the mastery of his own genius. He had already learnt to direct the stage to higher and nobler purposes than those of mere amusement. It might be carried farther into the teaching of the highest philosophy through the medium of the grandest poetry. The epoch which produced 'Othello,' 'Lear,' and 'Macbeth' has been described as exhibiting the genius of Shakspeare in full possession and habitual exercise of power, "at its very point of culmination."

The year 1601 was also a year which brought to Shakspeare a great domestic affliction. His father died on the 8th of September of that year. It is impossible not to feel that Shakspeare's family arrangements, imperfectly as we know them, had especial reference to the comfort and honour of his parents. When he bought New Place in 1597, his occupations then demanding his presence in London through great part of the year, his wife and children, we may readily imagine, were under the same roof with his father and mother. They had sighed over the declining health of his little Hamnet,—they had watched over the growth of his Susanna and Judith. If restricted means had at any previous period assailed them, he had provided for the comforts of their advanced age. And now that father, the companion of his boyhood—he who had led him forth into the fields and had taught him to look at nature with a practical eye—was gone. More materials

for deep thought in the year 1601. The Register of Stratford attests the death of this earliest friend.

The fortieth volume of the registers of the Town Council of Aberdeen contains some entries, which are not without their reference to the life of Shakspeare:—

" Nono Octobris 1601.

" Ordinance to the dean of gild.

" The samen day The prouest Bailleis and counsall ordanis the ssume of throttie tua merkis to be gevin to the Kingis seruandes presently in this burcht.. quha playes comedeis and staige playes Be reassoun they ar recommendit be his majesties speciall letter and hes played sum of their comedies in this burcht and ordanis the said ssume to be payit to thum be the dean of gild quhilk salbe allowit in his comptis." ♣

" 22 Octr 1601.

" The Quhilk day Sir Francis Hospitall of Haulszie Knycht Frenschman being recommendit be his majistie to the Prouest Bailleis and Counsall of this brocht to be favorallie Interteneit with the gentilmen his majesties seruands efter specifeit quha war direct to this burcht be his majes:ie to accompanie the said Frenshman being ane nobillman of France cumming only to this burcht to see the towne and cuntie the said Frenshman with the knightis and gentillmen folowing wer all reassuit and admittit Burgeses of Gild of this burcht quha gawe thair althis in common form folowis the names of thame that war admittit burgeses

Sir Francis Hospitall of halzie knycht

Sir Claud Hamiltoun of Schawfeild knycht

Sir John Grahame of orkill knycht

Sir John Ramsay of Ester Baronie knycht

James Hay James Auchterlony Robert Ker James Schaw

Thomas foster James Gleghorne David Drummond

Servitors to his Majestie

Monsieur de Scheyne Monsieur la Bar Scrutours to the said

Sir Francis

James Law

James Hamiltoun seruitour to the said Sir Claud

Archibald Sym Trumpeter

Laurence Fletcher comediane to his majestie.

Mr David Wod

Johne Broderstainis"

These documents present something more than the facts, that a company of players, specially recommended by the King, were paid a gratuity from the Corporation of Aberdeen for their performances in that town, one of them subsequently receiving the freedom of the borough. The provost, baillies, and council ordain that thirty-two marks should be given to the *King's servants* then in that borough, who played comedies and stage-plays. The circumstance that they are recommended by the King's special letter is not so important as the description of them as the King's servants. Thirteen days after the entry of the 9th of October, at which first period these servants of the King had played some of their comedies, Lawrence Fletcher, comedian to his Majesty, is admitted a burghess of guild of the borough of Aberdeen—the greatest honour which the Corporation could bestow. He is admitted to this honour in company with a nobleman of France visiting Aberdeen for the gratification of his curiosity, and recommended by the King to be favourably entertained; as well as with three men of rank, and others, who were directed by his Majesty to accompany "the said Frenchman." All the party are described in the document as knights and gentlemen. We have to inquire, then, who was Lawrence Fletcher, comedian to his Majesty? Assuredly the King had not in his service a company of Scotch players. In 1599 he had licensed a company of

English comedians to play at Edinburgh. Fond as James was of theatrical exhibitions, he had not the means of gratifying his taste, except through the visits of English comedians. Scotland had no drama in the proper sense of the word. We may safely conclude that King James would have no Scottish company of players, because Scotland had no dramas to play.

"Lawrence Fletcher, comedian to his Majesty," was undoubtedly an Englishman; and "the King's servants presently in this borough who play comedies and stage-plays" were as certainly English players. There are not many facts known by which we can trace the history of Lawrence Fletcher. He is not mentioned amongst "the names of the principal actors in all these plays," which list is given in the first folio edition of Shakspeare; but he undoubtedly belonged to Shakspeare's company. Augustine Phillipps, who, by his will, in 1605, bequeathed a thirty-shilling piece of gold to his "fellow" William Shakspeare, also bequeathed twenty shillings to his "fellow" Lawrence Fletcher. But there is more direct evidence than this of the connexion of Fletcher with Shakspeare's company. The patent of James I., dated at Westminster on the nineteenth of May, 1603, in favour of the players acting at the Globe, is headed "Pro Laurentio Fletcher et Willielmo Shakspeare et aliis;" and it licenses and authorises the performances of "Laurence Fletcher, William Shakspeare, Richard Burbage, Augustine Phillipps, John Hemings, Henrie Condell, William Sly, Robert Armin, Richard Cowly, and the rest of their associates." The connexion in 1603 of Fletcher and Shakspeare cannot be more distinctly established than by this document.

Chalmers says that Fletcher "was placed before Shakspeare and Richard Burbage in King James's licence as much perhaps by accident as by design." The Aberdeen Register is evidence against this opinion. Lawrence Fletcher, comedian to his Majesty, is admitted to honours which are not bestowed upon the other King's servants who had acted plays in the borough of Aberdeen in 1601. Lawrence Fletcher is first named in the letters patent of 1603. It is evident, we think, that he was admitted a burghess of Aberdeen as the head of the company, and that he was placed first in the royal licence for the same reason. But there is a circumstance, we apprehend, set forth in the Aberdeen Registers which is not only important with reference to the question of Shakspeare having visited Scotland, but which explains a remarkable event in the history of the stage. The company rewarded by the Corporation of Aberdeen on the 9th of October, 1601, were not only recommended by his Majesty's special letter, but they were the King's servants. Lawrence Fletcher, according to the second entry, was comedian to his Majesty. This English company, then, had received an honour from the Scottish King, which had not been bestowed upon them by the English Queen. They were popularly termed the Queen's players about 1590; but, subsequently, we find them invariably mentioned in the official entries as the Lord Chamberlain's servants. Mr. Collier, in noticing the licence '*Pro Laurentio Fletcher et Willielmo Shakspeare et aliis*,' says that the Lord Chamberlain's company "by virtue of this instrument, in which they are termed 'our servants,' became the King's players, and were so after-

wards constantly distinguished." But the instrument did not create Lawrence Fletcher, William Shakspeare, and others, the King's servants: it recognises them as the King's servants already appointed: "Know you that we, of our special grace, certain knowledge, and mere motion, have licensed and authorised, and by these presents do license and authorise, these our servants," &c. They are licensed to use and exercise their art and faculty "as well for the recreation of our loving subjects as for our solace and pleasure, when we shall think good to see them." They are "to show and exercise publicly to their best commodity when the infection of the plague shall decrease, within their now usual house called the Globe," as in all other places. The justices, mayors, sheriffs, and others^d to whom the letters patent are addressed, are called upon to aid and assist them, and to do them courtesies; and the instrument thus concludes: "And also what further favour you shall show to these our servants for our sake we shall take kindly at your hands." The terms of this patent exhibit towards the players of the Globe a favour and countenance, almost an affectionate solicitude for their welfare, which is scarcely reconcilable with a belief that they first became the King's players by virtue of this instrument. James arrived in London, at the Charter House, on the 7th of May, 1603. He then removed to the Tower, and subsequently to Greenwich on the 13th. The Privy Seal, directing the letters patent to Fletcher, Shakspeare, and others, is dated from Greenwich on the 17th of May; and in that document the exact words of the patent are prescribed. The words of the Privy Seal and of the patent undoubtedly

imply some previous appointment of the persons therein named as the King's servants. It appears scarcely possible that during the three days which elapsed between James taking up his residence at Greenwich, and the day on which the Privy Seal is issued, the Lord Chamberlain's servants, at the season of the plague, should have performed before the King, and have so satisfied him that he constituted them his own servants. It would at first seem improbable that amidst the press of business consequent upon the accession, the attention of the King should have been directed to the subject of players at all, especially in the selection of a company as his own servants, contrary to the precedent of the former reign. If these players had been the servants of Elizabeth, their appointment as the servants of James might have been asked as a matter of course; but certain players were at once to be placed above all their professional brethren, by the King's own act, carried into effect within ten days after his arrival within his new metropolis. But all these objections are removed when we refer to the facts opened to us by the council registers of Aberdeen. King James the Sixth of Scotland had recommended his servants to the magistrates of Aberdeen; and Lawrence Fletcher, there can be no doubt, was one of those servants so recommended. The patent of James the First of England directed to Lawrence Fletcher, William Shakspeare, and others, eighteen months after the performances at Aberdeen, is directed to those persons as "our servants." It does not appoint them the King's servants, but recognises the appointment as already existing. Can there be a reasonable doubt that the appointment was ori-

ginally made by the King in Scotland, and subsisted when the same King ascended the English throne? Lawrence Fletcher was admitted a burghess of Guild of the borough of Aberdeen as comedian to his Majesty, in company with other persons who were servitors to his Majesty. He received that honour, we may conclude, as the head of the company, also the King's servants. We know not how he attained this distinction amongst his fellows, but it is impossible to imagine that accident so favoured him in two instances. The King's servant who was most favoured at Aberdeen, and the King's servant who is first in the patent in 1603, was surely placed in that position by the voice of his fellows, the other King's servants. William Shakspeare is named with him in a marked manner in the heading of the patent. Seven of their fellows are also named, as distinguished from "the rest of their associates." There can be no doubt of the identity of the Lawrence Fletcher, the servant of James VI. of Scotland, and the Lawrence Fletcher, the servant of James I. of England. Can we doubt that the King's servants who played comedies and stage plays in Aberdeen, in 1601, were, taken as a company, the King's servants who were licensed to exercise the art and faculty of playing, throughout all the realm, in 1603? If these points are evident, what reason have we to doubt that William Shakspeare, the second named in the licence of 1603, was amongst the King's servants at Aberdeen in 1601? Every circumstance concurs in the likelihood that he was of that number recommended by the King's special letter; and his position in the licence, even before Burbage, was, we may well believe a compli-

ment to him who in 1601 had taught "our James" something of the power and riches of the English drama. These circumstances give us, we think, warrant to conclude that the story of Macbeth might have been suggested to Shakspeare upon Scottish ground; that the accuracy displayed in the local descriptions and allusions might have been derived from a rapid personal observation; and that some of the peculiarities of his witchcraft imagery might have been found in Scottish superstitions, and more especially in those which were rife at Aberdeen at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

In May, 1602, Shakspeare made a large addition to his property at Stratford by the purchase, from William and John Combe, for the sum of three hundred and twenty pounds, of one hundred and seven acres of arable land in the town of Old Stratford. The indenture, which is in the possession of Mr. Wheler of Stratford, is dated the 1st of May, 1602. The conveyance bears the signatures of the vendors of the property. But although it concludes in the usual form, "The parties to these presents having interchangeably set to their hands and seals," the counterpart (also in the possession of Mr. Wheler) has not the hand and seal of the purchaser of the property described in the deed as "William Shakespere, of Stratford-upon-Avon, in the countie aforesaide, Gentleman." The counterpart is not signed, and the piece of wax which is affixed to it is unimpressed with any seal. The acknowledgment of possession is however recorded. The property is delivered to Gilbert Shakspeare to the use of William. Gilbert was two years and a half younger than William, and in all

likelihood was the cultivator of the land which the poet thus bought, or assisted their father in the cultivation.

Amongst the few papers rescued from "time's devouring maw" which enable us to trace Shakspeare's career with any exactness, there is another which relates to the acquisition of property in the same year. It is a copy of Court Roll for the Manor of Rowington, dated the 28th of September, 1602, containing the surrender by Walter Getley to the use of William Shakspeare of a house in Stratford, situated in Walker Street. This tenement was opposite Shakspeare's house of New Place. It is now taken down; it was in existence a few years ago. This document, which is in the possession of Mr. Hunt, the town-clerk of Stratford, also shows that at the latter end of September, 1602, William Shakspeare, the purchaser of this property, was not at Stratford. It could not legally pass to him, being a copyhold, till he had done suit and service in the Lord's Court; and the surrender therefore provides that it should remain in the possession of the lord till he, the purchaser, should appear.

In the September of 1602 the Earl of Worcester, writing to the Earl of Shrewsbury, says, "We are frolic here in Court, much dancing in the Privy Chamber of country-dances before the Queen's Majesty, who is exceedingly pleased therewith." In the December she was entertained at Sir Robert Cecil's house in the Strand, and some of the usual devices of flattering mummery were exhibited before her. A few months saw a period to the frolic and the flattery. The last entry in the books of the Treasurer of the Chamber during the reign of Elizabeth, which pertains to Shak-

sper, is the following ;—melancholy in the contrast between the Candlemas-Day of 1603, the 2nd of February, and the following 24th of March, when Elizabeth died :—" To John Hemynges and the rest of his companie, servaunts to the Lorde Chamberleyne, uppon the Councells Warraunte, dated at Whitehall the xxth of Aprill, 1603, for their paines and expences in presentinge before the late Queenes Ma^{tie} twoe playes, the one uppon St. Stephens day at nighte, and thother upon Candlemas day at night, for ech of which they were allowed, by way of her Ma^{tie} rewarde, tenne poundes, amounting in all to xx^{li}."

King James I. of England left his good city of Edinburgh on the 5th of April, 1603. He was nearly five weeks on the road. On the 7th of May he was safely lodged at the Charter House ; and one of his first acts of authority was, as already noticed, after creating four new peers, and issuing a proclamation against robbery on the Borders, to order the Privy Seal for the patent to Lawrence Fletcher, William Shakspere, and others. We learn from the patent itself that the King's servants were to perform publicly "when the infection of the plague shall decrease." It is clear that the King's servants were not at liberty then to perform publicly. How long the theatres were closed we do not exactly know ; but a document is in existence, dated April 9th, 1604, directing the Lord Mayor of London, and Justices of Middlesex and Surrey, "to permit and suffer the three companies of players to the King, Queen, and Prince to exercise their plays in their severall and usual houses." On the 20th of October, 1603, Joan, the wife of the celebrated Edward Alleyn, writes

to her husband from London,—“About us the sickness doth cease, and likely more and more, by God's help, to cease. All the companies be come home, and well, for aught we know.” Her husband is hawking in the country, and Henslow, his partner, is at the Court. Shakspeare is in London. Some one propounded a theory that there was no real man called William Shakspeare, and that the plays which passed with his name were the works of Marlowe and others. This very letter of good Mrs. Alleyn shows that William Shakspeare not only lived, but went about pretty much like other people, calling common things by their common names, giving advice about worldly matters in the way of ordinary folk, and spoken of by the wife of his friend without any wonder or laudation, just as if he had written no ‘*Midsummer Night's Dream*,’ or ‘*Othello* :—“Aboute a weeke agoe there came a youthe, who said he was Mr. Francis Chaloner, who would have borrowed xli to have bought things for and said he was known unto you, and Mr. Shakespeare of the Globe, who came said he knewe hym not, onely he herde of hym that he was a roge so he was glade we did not lend him the monney. Richard Johnes [went] to seeke and inquire after the fellow, and said he had lent hym a horse. I feare me he gulled hym, thoughte he gulled not us. The youthe was a prety youthe, and handsome in appayrell: we knowe not what became of hym.”*

But although Shakspeare was in London on the 20th of October, 1603, it is tolerably clear that the performances at the public theatres were not resumed till after the

* From the Papers in Dulwich College, printed in Mr. Collier's ‘*Memoirs of Edward Alleyn*.’

order of the 9th of April, 1604. In the Office Books of the Treasurer of the Chamber there is an entry of a payment of thirty-two pounds upon the Council's warrant dated at Hampton Court, February 8th, 1604, "by way of his Majesty's free gift" to Richard Burbage, one of his Majesty's comedians, "for the maintenance and relief of himself and the rest of his company, being prohibited to present any plays publicly in or near London, by reason of great peril that might grow through the extraordinary concourse and assembly of people, to a new increase of the plague, till it shall please God to settle the city in a more perfect health."* But though the public playhouses might be closed through the fear of an "extraordinary concourse and assembly of people," the King, a few months previous, had sent for his own players to a considerable distance to perform before the Court at Wilton. There is an entry in the same Office Book of a payment of thirty pounds to John Hemings "for the pains and expenses of himself and the rest of his company in coming from Mortlake in the county of Surrey unto the Court aforesaid, and there presenting before his Majesty one play on the 2nd of December last, by way of his Majesty's reward." Wilton was the seat of William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, to whom it has been held that Shakspeare's Sonnets were addressed. We do not yield our assent to this opinion. But we know from good authority that this nobleman, "the most universally beloved and esteemed of any man of that age," (according to Clarendon,) befriended Shakspeare, and that his brother joined him in his acts of kindness. The dedication by John Heminge

* Cunningham's 'Revels at Court,' p. xxxv.

and Henry Condell, prefixed to the first collected edition of the works of Shakspeare, is addressed "To the most noble and incomparable pair of brethren, William Earl of Pembroke, and Philip Earl of Montgomery." In the submissive language of poor players to their "singular good lords" they say, "When we value the places your Honours sustain, we cannot but know their dignity greater than to descend to the reading of these trifles; and while we name them trifles, we have deprived ourselves of the defence of our dedication. But since your Lordships have been pleased to think these trifles something, heretofore; and have prosecuted both them, and their author living, with so much favour: we hope that (they out-living him, and he not having the fate, common with some, to be executor to his own writings) you will use the like indulgence toward them you have done unto their parent." They subsequently speak of their Lordships liking the several parts of the volume when they were acted; but their author was the object of their personal regard and favour. The call to Wilton of Shakspeare's company might probably have arisen from Lord Pembroke's desire to testify this favour. It would appear to be the first theatrical performance before James in England. The favour of the Herberts towards Shakspeare thus began early. The testimony of the player-editors would imply that it lasted during the poet's life.

At the Christmas of the same year the King had taken up his residence at Hampton Court. It was here, a little before the period when the Conference on Conformity in Religion was begun, that the Queen and eleven ladies of honour were presenting Daniel's

Masque ; and Shakspeare and his fellows performed six plays before the King and Prince, receiving twenty nobles for each play.* The patronage of the new King to his servants, players acting at the Globe, seems to have been constant and liberal. To Shakspeare this must have been a season of prosperity and of honour. The accession of the King gave him something better. His early friend and patron Southampton was released from a long imprisonment. Enjoying the friendship of Southampton and Pembroke, who were constantly about the King, their tastes may have led the monarch to a just preference of the works of Shakspeare before those of any other dramatist. The six plays performed before the King and Prince in the Christmas of 1603-4 at Hampton Court, were followed at the succeeding Christmas by performances " at the Banqueting-House at Whitehall," in which the plays of Shakspeare were preferred above those of every other competitor. There were eleven performances by the King's players, of which eight were plays of Shakspeare. Jonson shared this honour with him in the representation of ' Every One in his Humour,' and ' Every One out of his Humour.' A single play by Heywood, another by Chapman, and a tragedy by an unknown author, completed the list of these revels at Whitehall. It is told, Malone says, " upon authority which there is no reason to doubt, that King James bestowed especial honour upon Shakspeare." The story is told in the Advertisement to Lintot's edition of Shakspeare's Poems—" That most learned Prince, and great patron of learning, King James the First, was pleased with his own hand to

* Cunningham's ' Revels at Court,' p. xxxv.

write an amicable letter to Mr. Shakespeare; which letter, though now lost, remained long in the hands of Sir William Davenant, as a credible person now living can testify." Was the honour bestowed as a reward for the compliment to the King in 'Macbeth,' or was the compliment to the King a tribute of gratitude for the honour?

We have seen that in the year 1602 Shakspeare was investing the gains of his profession in the purchase of property at Stratford. It appears from the original Fines of the Court of King's Bench, preserved in the Chapter-house, that a little before the accession of James, in 1603, Shakspeare had also purchased a messuage at Stratford, with barns, gardens, and orchards, of Hercules Underhill, for the sum of sixty pounds. There can be little doubt that this continued acquisition of property in his native place had reference to the ruling desire of the poet to retire to his quiet fields and the placid intercourse of society at Stratford, out of the turmoil of his professional life and the excitement of the companionship of the gay and the brilliant. And yet it appears highly probable that he was encouraged, at this very period, through^d the favour of those who rightly estimated his merit, to apply for an office which would have brought him even more closely in connexion with the Court, that of Master of the Queen's Revels, to which office Samuel Daniel was appointed. It is not impossible that Shakspeare looked to this appointment as a compensation for his retirement from the profession of an actor, retaining his interest, however, as a theatrical proprietor. Be that as it may, he

still carried forward his ruling purpose of the acquisition of property at Stratford. In 1603 he accomplished a purchase which required a larger outlay than any previous investment. On the 24th of July, in the third year of James, a conveyance was made by Ralph Huband, Esq., to William Shakspeare, gentleman, of a moiety of a lease of the great and small tithes of Stratford, for the remainder of a term of ninety-two years, and the amount of the purchase was four hundred and forty pounds. There can be little doubt that he was the cultivator of his own land, availing himself of the assistance of his brother Gilbert, and, in an earlier period, probably of his father. An account in 1597 of the stock of malt in the borough of Stratford, is said to exhibit ten quarters in the possession of William Shakspeare, of Chapel Street Ward. New Place was situated in Chapel Street. The purchase of a moiety of the tithes of so large a parish as Stratford might require extensive arrangements for their collection. Tithes in those days were more frequently collected in kind than by a *modus*. But even if a *modus* was taken, it would require a knowledge of the value of agricultural produce to farm the tithes with advantage. But before the date of this purchase it is perfectly clear that William Shakspeare was in the exercise of the trading part of a farmer's business. He bought the hundred and seven acres of land of John and William Combe in May, 1602. In 1604 a declaration was entered in the Borough Court of Stratford, on a plea of debt, William Shakspeare against Philip Rogers, for the sum of thirty-five shillings and ten-pence, for corn delivered. The precept was issued in the usual form upon this declaration, the delivery of

the corn being stated to have taken place at several times in the first and second years of James. There cannot be more distinct evidence that William Shakspeare, at the very period when his dramas were calling forth the rapturous applause of the new Sovereign and his Court, and when he himself, as it would seem, was ambitious of a courtly office, did not disdain to pursue the humble though honourable occupation of a farmer in Stratford, and to exercise his just rights of property in connexion with that occupation. We must believe that he looked forward to the calm and healthful employment of the evening of his days, as a tiller of the land which his father had tilled before him, at the same time working out noble plans of poetical employment in his comparative leisure, as the best scheme of life in his declining years. The exact period when he commenced the complete realization of these plans is somewhat doubtful. He had probably ceased to appear as an actor before 1605. If the date 1608 be correctly assigned to a letter held to be written by Lord Southampton, it is clear that Shakspeare was not then an actor, for he is there described as "*till of late* an actor of good account in the company, *now* a sharer in the same." His partial freedom from his professional labours certainly preceded his final settlement at Stratford.

In the conveyance by the Combes to Shakspeare in 1602, he is designated as William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon. The same designation holds in subsequent legal documents connected with Stratford; but there is no doubt that, at the period of the conveyance from the Combes, he was an actor in the company

performing at the Blackfriars and at the Globe; and in tracing therefore the "whereabout" of Shakspeare, from the imperfect records which remain to us, we have assumed that where the fellows of Shakspeare are to be found, there is he to be also located. But in the belief that before 1608 he had ceased to be an actor, we are not required to assume that he was so constantly with his company as before that partial retirement. His interest would no doubt require his occasional presence with them, for he continued to be a considerable proprietor in their lucrative concerns. That prudence and careful management which could alone have enabled him to realize a large property out of his professional pursuits, and at the same time not to dissipate it by his agricultural occupations, appears to have been founded upon an arrangement by which he secured the assistance of his family, and at the same time made a provision for them. We have seen that in 1602 his brother Gilbert was his representative at Stratford. Richard, who was ten years his junior, and who, dying a year before him, was buried at Stratford, would also appear to have been resident there. His youngest brother Edmund, sixteen years his junior, was, there can be little question, associated with him in the theatre; and he probably looked to him to attend to the management of his property in London, after he retired from any active attention to its conduct. But Edmund died early. He lived in the parish of St. Saviour's, in all probability at his brother's house in the liberty of the Clink; and the register of burials of that parish has the following record:—"1607, December 31st, Edmond Shakespeare, a player, in the church." The death of

his brother might probably have had a considerable influence upon the habits of his life, and might have induced him to dispose of all his theatrical property, as there is reason to believe he did, several years before his death. The value of a portion of this property has been ascertained, as far as it can be, upon an estimate for its sale; and by this estimate the amount of his portion, as compared with that of his co-proprietors, is distinctly shown. In 1608 the question of the jurisdiction of the City in the Blackfriars, and especially with reference to the playhouse, was brought before Lord Ellesmere, the Chancellor. The proprietors of the theatre remained in undisturbed possession. Out of this attempt a negotiation appears to have arisen for the purchase of the property by the City; for amongst the documents connected with this attempt of the Corporation is found a paper headed, "For avoiding of the playhouse in the precinct of the Blackfriars." The document states, in conclusion, that "in the whole it will cost the Lord Mayor and the citizens at the least 7000*l*." Richard Burbage claims 1000*l*. for the fee, and for his four shares 933*l*. 6*s*. 8*d*. Laz. Fletcher owns three shares, which he rates at 700*l*., that is, at seven years' purchase. "W. Shakespeare asketh for the wardrobe and properties of the same playhouse 500^{li}, and for his four shares, the same as his fellowes Burbidge and Fletcher, viz. 933^{li} 6*s*. 8*d*." Heminge and Condell have each two shares, Taylor and Lowin each a share and a half; four more players each a half share; which they all value at the same rate. The hired men of the company also claim recompense for their loss; "and the widows

and orphans of players who are paid by the sharers at divers rates and proportions."* It thus appears that, next to Richard Burbage, Shakspeare was the largest proprietor in the theatre; that Burbage was the exclusive owner of the real property, and Shakspeare of the personal. If the valuation be correct, Shakspeare's annual income derived from his shares in the Blackfriars alone, was 133*l*. 6*s*. 8*d*. His wardrobe and properties, being perishable matters, were probably valued at five years' purchase, giving him an additional income of 100*l*. This income was derived from the Blackfriars alone. His property in the Globe Theatre was in all likelihood quite equal. He would, besides, derive additional advantages as the author of new plays. With a professional income, then, of 400*l*. or 500*l*. per annum, which may be held to be equal to six times the amount in our present money, it is evident that Shakspeare possessed the means not only of a liberal expenditure at his houses in London and at Stratford, but from the same source was enabled to realize considerable sums, which he invested in real property in his native place. All the records of Shakspeare's professional life, and the results of his success as exhibited in the accession of property, indicate a steady and regular advance. They show us that perseverance and industry were as much the characteristics of the man as the greatness of his genius; that he held with constancy to the course of life which he had early adopted; that year by year it afforded him increased competence and wealth; and that if he had the rare privilege of pur-

* This valuable document was discovered by Mr. Collier, and published by him in his 'New Facts.'

suing an occupation which called forth the highest exercise of his powers, rendering it in every essential a pleasurable occupation, he despised not the means by which he had risen : he lived in a free and genial intercourse with his professional brethren, and to the last they were his friends and fellows.

Aubrey says of Shakspeare, "He was wont to go to his native country once a-year." This statement, which there is no reason to disbelieve, has reference to the period when Shakspeare was engaged as an actor. There is another account of Shakspeare's mode of life, which does not contradict Aubrey, but brings down his information to a later period. In the 'Diary of the Rev. John Ward, Vicar of Stratford-upon-Avon,' the manuscript of which was discovered in the library of the Medical Society of London, we find the following curious record of Shakspeare's later years:—"I have heard that Mr. Shakspeare was a natural wit, without any art at all; he frequented the plays all his younger time, but in his elder days lived at Stratford, and supplied the stage with two plays every year, and for it had an allowance so large, that he spent at the rate of 1000*l.* a-year, as I have heard." The Diary of John Ward extends from 1648 to 1679; and it is in many respects interesting, from the circumstance that he united the practice of medicine to the performance of his duties as a parish priest. He was appointed to the vicarage of Stratford in 1662.

It is evident that, although forty-six years had elapsed since the death of Shakspeare, his memory was the leading association with Stratford-upon-Avon. After noticing that Shakspeare had two daughters, we find the

entry presented above. It is just possible that the new vicar of Stratford might have seen Shakspeare's younger daughter Judith, who was born in 1585, and, having married Thomas Quiney in 1616, lived to the age of seventy-seven, having been buried on the 9th of February, 1662. The descendants of Shakspeare's family and of his friends surrounded the worthy vicar on every side; and he appears to have thought it absolutely necessary to acquire such a knowledge of the productions of the great poet as might qualify him to speak of them in general society:—"Remember to peruse Shakespeare's plays, and bee much versed in them, that I may not bee ignorant in that matter." The honest vicar was not quite certain whether the fame of Shakspeare was only a provincial one, for he adds—"Whether Dr. Heylin does well, in reckoning up the dramattick poets which have been famous in England, to omit Shakespeare?" The good man is not altogether to be blamed for having previously to 1662 been "ignorant" of Shakspeare's plays. He was only thirty-three years of age; and his youth had been passed in the stormy period when the Puritans had well nigh banished all literature, and especially dramatic literature, from the minds of the people, in their intolerant proscription of all pleasure and recreation. At any rate we may accept the statements of the good vicar as founded upon the recollections of those with whom he was associated in 1662. It is wholly consistent with what we otherwise know of Shakspeare's life, that "he frequented the plays all his younger time." It is equally consistent that he "in his elder days lived at

Stratford." There is nothing improbable in the belief that he "supplied the stage with two plays every year." The last clause of the sentence is somewhat startling:—"And for it had an allowance so large, that he spent at the rate of 1000*l.* a-year, as I have heard." And yet the assertion must not be considered wholly an exaggeration. "He spent at the rate of 1000*l.* a-year," must mean the rate of the time when Mr. Ward is writing. During the half century which had preceded the Restoration there had been a more important decrease in the value of money than had even taken place in the reign of Elizabeth. During that reign the prices of all commodities were constantly rising; but after the reduction of the legal rate of interest from ten per cent. to eight in 1624, and from eight to six in 1651, the change was still more remarkable. Sir Josias Child, in 1688, says that five hundred pounds with a daughter, sixty years before, was esteemed a larger portion than two thousand pounds now. It would appear, therefore, that the thousand a-year in 1662 was not more than one-third of the amount in 1612; and this sum, from 300*l.* to 400*l.*, was, as near as may be, the amount which Shakspeare appears to have derived from his theatrical property. In all probability he held that property during the greater part of the period when he "supplied the stage with two plays every year;" and this indirect remuneration for his poetical labours might readily have been mistaken, fifty years afterwards, as "an allowance so large" for authorship that the good vicar records it as a memorable thing.

It is established that 'Othello' was performed in 1602;

'Hamlet,' greatly enlarged, was published in 1604; 'Measure for Measure' was acted before the Court on St. Stephen's night in the same year. If we place Shakspeare's partial retirement from his professional duties about this period, and regard the plays whose dates up to this point have not been fixed by any authentic record, or satisfactory combination of circumstances, we have abundant work in reserve for the great poet in the maturity of his intellect. 'Lear,' 'Macbeth,' 'Timon of Athens,' 'Troilus and Cressida,' 'Cymbeline,' 'The Winter's Tale,' 'The Tempest,' 'Henry VIII.,' 'Coriolanus,' 'Julius Cæsar,' 'Antony and Cleopatra,' eleven of the noblest productions of the human intellect, so varied in their character,—the deepest passion, the profoundest philosophy, the wildest romance, the most comprehensive history—what a glorious labour to fill the nine or ten remaining years of the life of the man who had left his native fields twenty years before to seek for advancement in doubtful and perilous paths,—in a profession which was denounced by some and despised by others,—amongst companions full of genius and learning, but who had perished early in their pride and their self-abandonment! And he returns wealthy and honoured to the bosom of those who are dearest to him—his wife and daughters, his mother, his sisters and brothers. The companions of his boyhood are all around him. They have been useful members of society in their native place. He has constantly kept up his intercourse with them. They have looked to him for assistance in their difficulties. He is come to be one of them, to dwell wholly amongst them, to take a deeper interest in their

pleasures and in their cares, to receive their sympathy. He is come to walk amidst his own fields, to till them, to sell their produce. His labour will be his recreation. In the activity of his body will the energy of his intellect find its support and its rest. His nature is eminently fitted for action as well as contemplation. Were it otherwise, he would have "bad dreams," like his own Hamlet. Morbid thoughts may have come over him "like a passing cloud;" but from this time his mind will be eminently healthful. The imagination and the reason henceforth will be wonderfully balanced. Much of this belongs to the progressive character of his understanding; something to his favourable position.

With the exception of a playful piece of ridicule in 'The Merry Wives of Windsor,' we know not of a single personality which can be alleged against Shakspeare, in an age when his dramatic contemporaries, especially, bespattered their rivals and their enemies as fiercely as any modern paragraph writer. But vulgar opinion, which is too apt most easily to recognise the power of talent in its ability to inflict pain, has assigned to Shakspeare a performance which has the quality, extraordinary as regards himself, of possessing scurrility without wit. It is something lower in the moral scale even than the fabricated ballad upon Sir Thomas Lucy; for it exhibits a wanton and unprovoked outrage upon an unoffending neighbour, in the hour of convivial intercourse. Rowe tells the story as if he thought he were doing honour to the genius of the man whose good qualities he is at the same moment

recording : "The latter part of his life was spent, as all men of good sense will wish theirs may be—in ease, retirement, and the conversation of his friends. He had the good fortune to gather an estate equal to his occasion, and, in that, to his wish ; and is said to have spent some years before his death at his native Stratford. His pleasurable wit and good nature engaged him in the acquaintance, and entitled him to the friendship, of the gentlemen of the neighbourhood. Amongst them, it is a story still remembered in that country that he had a particular intimacy with Mr. Combe, an old gentleman noted thereabouts for his wealth and usury : it happened, that in a pleasant conversation amongst their common friends, Mr. Combe told Shakspeare, in a laughing manner, that he fancied he intended to write his epitaph, if he happened to outlive him, and since he could not know what might be said of him when he was dead, he desired it might be done immediately, upon which Shakspeare gave him these four lines :—

'Ten in the hundred lies here ingrav'd ;
'T is a hundred to ten his soul is not sav'd :
If any man ask, Who lies in this tomb ?
Oh ! Oh ! quoth the devil, 't is my John-a-Combe.'

But the sharpness of the satire is said to have stung the man so severely, that he never forgave it." Certainly this is an extraordinary illustration of Shakspeare's "pleasurable wit and good nature"—of those qualities which won for him the name of the "gentle Shakspeare ;" which made Jonson, stern enough to most men, proclaim—"He was honest, and of an open and free

nature," and that his "mind and manners" were reflected in his "well-turned and true-filed lines." John-a-Combe never forgave the sharpness of the satire! And yet he bequeathed by his last will "To Mr. William Shakspeare, five pounds." Aubrey tells the story with a difference:—"One time, as he was at the tavern at Stratford-upon-Avon, one Combes, an old rich usurer, was to be buried, he makes there this extemporary epitaph;" and then he gives the lines with a variation, in which "vows" rhymes to "allows," instead of "sav'd" to "ingrav'd." Of course, following out this second story, the family of John Combe resented the insult to the memory of their parent, who died in 1614; and yet an intimacy subsisted between them even till the death of Shakspeare, for in his own will he bequeaths to the son of the usurer a remarkable token of personal regard, the badge of a gentleman:—"To Mr. Thomas Combe my sword." The whole story is a fabrication. *Ten* in the hundred was the old name of opprobrium for one who lent money. To receive interest at all was called usury. "That ten in the hundred was gone to the devil," was an old joke, that shaped itself into epigrams long before the death of John Combe; and in the 'Remains of Richard Brathwaite,' printed in 1618, we have the very epitaph assigned to Shakspeare, with a third set of variations, given as a notable production of this voluminous writer: "Upon one John Combe, of Stratford-upon-Avon, a notable usurer, fastened upon a Tombe that he had caused to be built in his Lifetime." The lie direct is given by the will of John Combe to this third version of the lines against

him; for it directs that a convenient tomb shall be erected one year after his decease.

The register of marriages at Stratford-upon-Avon for the year 1607 contains the entry of the marriage of John Hall, gentleman, and Susanna Shakspeare, on the 5th June. Susanna, the eldest daughter of William Shakspeare, was now twenty-four years of age. John Hall, gentleman, a physician settled at Stratford, was in his thirty-second year. This appears in every respect to have been a propitious alliance. Shakspeare received into his family a man of learning and talent.

The season at which the marriage of Shakspeare's elder daughter took place would appear to give some corroboration to the belief that, at this period, he had wholly ceased to be an actor. It is not likely that an event to him so deeply interesting would have taken place during his absence from Stratford. It was the season of performances at the Globe. It is at this period that we can fix the date of 'Lear.' That wonderful tragedy was first published in 1608; and the title-page recites that "It was plaid before the King's Majesty at White-Hall, uppon S. Stephen's Night; in Christmas Hollidaies." This most extraordinary production might well have been the first fruits of a period of comparative leisure; when the creative faculty was wholly untrammelled by petty cares, and the judgment might be employed in working again and again upon the first conceptions, so as to produce such a masterpiece of consummate art without after labour. The next season of repose gave birth to an effort of genius wholly different in character; but almost as wonderful in its profound

sagacity and knowledge of the world, as 'Lear' is unequalled for its depth of individual passion. 'Troilus and Cressida' was published in 1609. We may well believe that the Sonnets were published in 1609, without the consent of their author. That the appearance of those remarkable lyrics should have annoyed him, by exposing, as they now appear in the eyes of some to do, the frailties of his nature, we do not for a moment believe. They would be received by his family and by the world as essentially fictitious; and ranked with the productions of the same class with which the age abounded.

The year 1608 brought its domestic joys and calamities to Shakspeare. In the same font where he had been baptized, forty-three years before, was baptized, on the 21st of February, his grand-daughter, "Elizabeth, daughter of John Hall." In the same grave where his father was laid in 1601, was buried his mother, "Mary Shakspeare, widow," on the 9th of September, 1608. She was the youngest daughter of Robert Arden, who died in 1556. She was probably, therefore, about seventy years of age when her sons followed her to the "house of all living."

There is a memorandum existing, by Thomas Greene, a contemporary of Shakspeare, residing at Stratford, which, under the date of November 17th, 1614, has this record:—"My cousin Shakspeare coming yesterday to town, I went to see him how he did." We cite this memorandum here, as an indication of Shakspeare's habit of occasionally visiting London; for Thomas Greene was then in the capital, with the intent of opposing the project of an inclosure at Stratford. The

frequency of Shakspeare's visits to London would essentially depend upon the nature of his connexion with the theatres. He was a permanent shareholder, as we have seen, at the Blackfriars; and no doubt at the Globe also. His interests as a sharer might be diligently watched over by his fellows; and he might only have visited London when he had a new play to bring forward, the fruit of his leisure in the country. But until he disposed of his wardrobe and other properties, more frequent demands might be made upon his personal attendance than if he were totally free from the responsibilities belonging to the charge of such an embarrassing stock in trade. Mr. Collier has printed a memorandum in the handwriting of Edward Alleyn, dated April 1612, of the payment of various sums "for the Blackfryers," amounting to 599*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* Mr. Collier adds, "To whom the money was paid is nowhere stated; but, for aught we know, it was to Shakespeare himself, and just anterior to his departure from London." The memorandum is introduced with the observation, "It seems very likely, from evidence now for the first time to be adduced, that Alleyn became the purchaser of our great dramatist's interest in the theatre, properties, wardrobe, and stock of the Blackfriars." Certainly the document itself says nothing about properties, wardrobe, and stock. It is simply as follows:—

" 1612.

Money paid by me E. A. for the Blackfryers	160 li
More for the Blackfryers	126 li
More againe for the Lease	310 li
The writings for the same, and other small charges	3 li 6 <i>s.</i> 8 <i>d.</i> "
	2 c 3

More than half of the entire sum is paid "again for the lease." If the estimate "For avoiding of the Playhouse,"* be not rejected as an authority, the conjecture of Mr. Collier that the property purchased by Alleyn belonged to Shakspeare is wholly untenable; for the Fee, valued at a thousand pounds, was the property of Burbage, and to the owner of the Fee would be paid the sum for the lease. Subsequent memoranda by Alleyn show that he paid rent for the Blackfriars, and expended sums upon the building—collateral proofs that it was not Shakspeare's personal property that he bought in April 1612. There is distinct evidence furnished by another document that Shakspeare was not a resident in London in 1613; for in an indenture executed by him on the 10th of March in that year, for the purchase of a dwelling-house in the precinct of the Blackfriars, he is described as "William Shakespeare of Stratforde Upon Avon in the countie of Warwick gentleman;" whilst his fellow John Hemyng, who is a party to the same deed, is described as "of London, gentleman." From the situation of the property it would appear to have been bought either as an appurtenance to the theatre, or for some protection of the interests of the sharers. In the deed of 1602, Shakspeare is also described as of Stratford-upon-Avon. It is natural that he should be so described, in a deed for the purchase of land at Stratford; but upon the same principle, had he been a resident in London in 1613, he would have been described as of London in a deed for the purchase of property in London. Yet we also look

* See page 382.

upon this conveyance as evidence that Shakspeare had in March 1613 not wholly severed himself from his interest in the theatre. He is in London at the signing of the deed, attending, probably, to the duties which still devolved upon him as a sharer in the Blackfriars. He is not a resident in London; he has come to town, as Thomas Greene describes in 1614. But we have no evidence that he sold his theatrical property at all. Certainly the evidence that he sold it to Edward Alleyn may be laid aside in any attempt to fix the date of Shakspeare's departure from London.

Every one agrees that during the last three or four years of his life Shakspeare ceased to write. Yet we venture to think that every one is in error. The opinion is founded upon a belief that he only finally left London towards the close of 1613. We have shown, from his purchase of a large house at Stratford, his constant acquisition of landed property there, his active engagements in the business of agriculture, the interest which he took in matters connected with his property in which his neighbours had a common interest, that he must have partially left London before this period. There were no circumstances, as far as we can collect, to have prevented him finally leaving London several years before 1613. But his biographers, having fixed a period for the termination of his connexion with the active business of the theatre, assume that he became wholly unemployed; that he gave himself up, as Rowe has described, to "ease, retirement, and the conversation of his friends." His income was enough, they say to dispense with labour; and therefore he did not

labour. But when the days of leisure arrived, is it reasonable to believe that the mere habit of his life would not assert its ordinary control ; that the greatest of intellects would suddenly sink to the condition of an every-day man—cherishing no high plans for the future, looking back with no desire to equal and excel the work of the past ? At the period of life when Chaucer began to write the ‘*Canterbury Tales*,’ Shakspeare, according to his biographers, was suddenly and utterly to cease to write. We cannot believe it. Is there a parallel case in the career of any great artist who had won for himself competence and fame ? Is the mere applause of the world, and a sufficiency of the goods of life, “the end-all and the be-all” of the labours of a mighty mind ? These attained, is the voice of his spiritual being to be heard no more ? If those who reason thus could present a satisfactory record of the dates of all Shakspeare’s works, and especially of his later works, we should still cling to the belief that some fruits of the last years of his literary industry had wholly perished. It is unnecessary, as it appears to us, to adopt any such theory. Without the means of fixing the precise date of many particular dramas, we have indisputable traces, up to this period, of the appearance of at least five-sixths of all Shakspeare’s undoubted works. Are there any dramas whose individual appearance is not accounted for by those who have attempted to fix the exact chronology of other plays ? There are such dramas, and they form a class. They are the three great Roman plays of ‘*Coriolanus*,’ ‘*Julius Cæsar*,’ and ‘*Antony and Cleopatra*.’

The happy quiet of Shakspeare's retreat was not wholly undisturbed by calamity, domestic and public. His brother Richard, who was ten years his junior, was buried at Stratford on the 4th of February, 1613. Of his father's family his sister Joan, who had married Mr. William Hart of Stratford, was probably the only other left. There is no record of the death of his brother Gilbert; but as he is not mentioned in the will of William, in all likelihood he died before him. Oldys, in his manuscript notes upon Langbaine, has a story of "One of Shakspeare's younger brothers, who lived to a good old age, even some years, as I compute, after the restoration of King Charles II." Gilbert was born in 1566; so that if he had lived some years after the restoration of Charles II. it is not surprising that "his memory was weakened," as Oldys reports, and that he could give "the most noted actors" but "little satisfaction in their endeavours to learn something from him of his brother." The story of Oldys is clearly apocryphal, as far as regards any brother of Shakspeare's. They were a short-lived race. His sister, indeed, survived him thirty years. The family at New Place, at this period, would be composed therefore of his wife only, and his unmarried daughter Judith; unless his elder daughter and his son-in-law formed a part of the same household, with their only child Elizabeth, who was born in 1608. The public calamity to which we have alluded was a great fire, which broke out at Stratford on the 9th of July, 1614. That Shakspeare assisted with all the energy of his character in alleviating the miseries of this calamity, and in the restoration of his

town, we cannot doubt. In the same year we find him taking some interest in the project of an inclosure of the common-fields of Stratford. The inclosure would probably have improved his property, and especially have increased the value of the tithes, of the moiety of which he held a lease. The Corporation of Stratford were opposed to the inclosure. They held that it would be injurious to the poorer inhabitants, who were then deeply suffering from the desolation of the fire; and they appear to have been solicitous that Shakspeare should take the same view of the matter as themselves. His friend William Combe, then high sheriff of the county, was a principal person engaged in forwarding the inclosure. The Corporation sent their common clerk, Thomas Greene, to London, to oppose the project; and a memorandum in his hand-writing, which still remains, exhibits the business-like manner in which Shakspeare informed himself of the details of the plan. The first memorandum is dated the 17th of November, 1614, and is as follows:—"My Cosen Shakspeare comyng yesterday to town, I went to see how he did. He told me that they assured him they meut to inclose no further than to Gospel Bush, and so upp straight (leaving out pt. of the Dyngles to the field) to the gate in Clopton hedg, and take in Salisbury's peece; and that they mean in Aprill to svey. the land and then to gyve satisfaccion, and not before; and he and Mr. Hall say they think yr. will be nothyng done at all." Mr. Greene appears to have returned to Stratford in about a fortnight after the date of this memorandum, and Shakspeare seems to have remained in London; for ac-

According to a second memorandum, which is damaged and partly illegible, an official letter was written to Shakspeare by the Corporation, accompanied by a private letter from Mr. Greene, moving him to exert his influence against this plan of the inclosure:—"23 Dec. A. Hall, Lres. wrytten, one to Mr. Manyring—another to Mr. Shakspeare, with almost all the company's hands to eyther. I also wrytte myself to my Csn. Shakspear, the coppyes of all our . . . then also a note of the inconvenyences wold . . . by the inclosure." Arthur Manering, to whom one of these letters was written by the Corporation, was officially connected with the Lord Chancellor, and then residing at his house; and from the letter to him, which has been preserved, "it appears that he was apprised of the injury to be expected from the intended inclosure; reminded of the damage that Stratford, then 'lying in the ashes of desolation,' had sustained from recent fires; and entreated to forbear the inclosure." The letter to Shakspeare has not been discovered. The fact of its having been written leaves no doubt of the importance which was attached to his opinion by his neighbours. Truly in his later years he had

"Honour, love, obedience, troops of friends."

The younger daughter of Shakspeare was married on the 10th of February, 1616, to Thomas Quiney, as the register of Stratford shows. Thomas Quiney was the son of Richard Quiney of Stratford, whom we have seen in 1598 soliciting the kind offices of his loving countryman Shakspeare. Thomas, who was born in

1588, was probably a well-educated man. The last will of Shakspeare would appear to have been prepared in some degree with reference to this marriage. It is dated the 25th of March, 1616; but the word "Januarii" seems to have been first written and afterwards struck out, "Martii" having been written above it. It is not unlikely, and indeed it appears most probable, that the document was prepared before the marriage of Judith; for the elder daughter is mentioned as Susanna Hall,—the younger simply as Judith. To her, one hundred pounds is bequeathed, and fifty pounds conditionally. The life-interest of a further sum of one hundred and fifty pounds is also bequeathed to her, with remainder to her children; but if she died without issue within three years after the date of the will, the hundred and fifty pounds was to be otherwise appropriated. We pass over the various legacies to relations and friends to come to the bequest of the great bulk of the property. All the real estate is devised to his daughter Susanna Hall, for and during the term of her natural life. It is then entailed upon her first son and his heirs male; and in default of such issue, to her second son and his heirs male; and so on: in default of such issue, to his granddaughter Elizabeth Hall (called in the language of the time his "niece"): and in default of such issue, to his daughter Judith and her heirs male. By this strict entailment it was manifestly the object of Shakspeare to found a family. Like many other such purposes of short-sighted humanity the object was not accomplished. His elder daughter had no issue but Elizabeth, and she died

childless. The heirs male of Judith died before her. The estates were scattered after the second generation; and the descendants of his sister were the only transmitters to posterity of his blood and lineage.

"Item, I give unto my wife my second-best bed, with the furniture." This is the clause of the will upon which, for half a century, all men believed that Shakspeare recollected his wife only to mark how little he esteemed her,—to "cut her off, not indeed with a shilling, but with an old bed."* We had the satisfaction of first showing the utter groundlessness of this opinion; and we here briefly repeat the statement which we made in our Postscript to 'Twelfth Night,' that the wife of Shakspeare was unquestionably provided for by the natural operation of the law of England. His estates, with the exception of a copyhold tenement, expressly mentioned in his will, were *freehold*. *His wife was entitled to dower*. She was provided for amply, *by the clear and undeniable operation of the English law*. Of the houses and gardens which Shakspeare inherited from his father, she was assured of the life-interest of a third, should she survive her husband, the instant that old John Shakspeare died. Of the capital messuage called New Place, the best house in Stratford, which Shakspeare purchased in 1597, she was assured of the same life-interest, from the moment of the conveyance, provided it was a direct conveyance to her husband. That it was so conveyed we may infer from the terms of the conveyance of the lands in Old Stratford, and

* Malone.

other places, which were purchased by Shakspeare in 1602, and were then conveyed "to the onlye proper use and behoofe of the saide William Shakspeare, his heires and assignes, for ever." Of a life-interest in a third of these lands also was she assured. The tenement in Blackfriars, purchased in 1614, was conveyed to Shakspeare and *three other persons*; and after his death was re-conveyed by those persons to the uses of his will, "for and in performance of the confidence and trust in them reposed by William Shakespeare deceased." In this estate, certainly, the widow of our poet had not dower. It has been remarked to us that even the express mention of the second-best bed was anything but unkindness and insult; that the best bed was in all probability an heir-loom: it might have descended to Shakspeare himself from his father as an heir-loom, and, as such, was the property of his own heirs. The best bed was considered amongst the most important of those chattels which went to the heir by custom with the house.*

.The will of Shakspeare thus commences:—"I, William Shakspeare, of Stratford-upon-Avon, in the county of Warwick, gent., in perfect health and memory, (God be praised!) do make and ordain this my last will and

* "And note that in some places chattels as heir-loomes (as the best bed, table, pot, pan, cart, and other dead chattels moveable) may go to the heir, and the heir in that case may have an action for them at the common law, and shall not sue for them in the ecclesiastical court; but the heir-loom is due by custom, and not by the common law."—*Coke upon Littleton*, 18 b.

testament." And yet within one month of this declaration William Shakspeare is no more :

OBIIT ANO. DOM. 1616. ÆTATIS 53. DIE 23. AP.

Such is the inscription on his tomb. It is corroborated by the register of his burial :—"April 25. Will Shakspeare gent." Writing forty-six years after the event, the vicar of Stratford says, "Shakspeare, Drayton, and Ben Jonson had a merry meeting, and, it seems, drank too hard, for Shakspeare died of a fever there contracted." A tradition of this nature, surviving its object nearly half a century, is not much to be relied on. But if it were absolutely true, our reverence for Shakspeare would not be diminished by the fact that he accelerated his end in the exercise of hospitality, according to the manner of his age, towards two of the most illustrious of his friends. The "merry-meeting," the last of many social hours spent with the full-hearted Jonson and the elegant Drayton, may be contemplated without a painful feeling. Shakspeare possessed a mind eminently social—"he was of a free and generous nature." But, says the tradition of half a century, "he drank too hard" at this "merry meeting." We believe that this is the vulgar colouring of a common incident. He "died of a fever there contracted." The fever that is too often the attendant upon a hot spring, when the low grounds upon a river bank have been recently inundated, is a fever that the good people of Stratford did not well understand at that day. The "merry meeting" rounded off a tradition much more effectively. Whatever was the immediate cause of his last illness, we may well

believe that the closing scene was full of tranquillity and hope; and that he who had sought, perhaps more than any man, to look beyond the material and finite things of the world, should rest at last in the "peace which passeth all understanding"—in that assured belief which the opening of his will has expressed with far more than formal solemnity:—"I commend my soul into the hands of God my creator, hoping, and assuredly believing, through the only merits of Jesus Christ, my Saviour, to be made partaker of life everlasting."

KNIGHT'S CABINET EDITION.

STUDIES OF SHAKSPERE:

INTRODUCTORY VOLUME,

CONTAINING

A HISTORY OF OPINION

ON THE

Writings of Shakspeare;

WITH

THE CHRONOLOGY OF HIS PLAYS.

LONDON:

WILLIAM S. ORR AND CO:

FATLEKOSTER-ROW.

1851.



STUDIES
OF
SHAKSPERE

THE INTRODUCTORY VOLUME.



HISTORY OF OPINION ON THE WRITINGS OF SHAKSPERE.

CHAPTER I.

THE rank as a writer which Shakspeare took amongst his contemporaries is determined by a few decided notices of him. These notices are as ample and as frequent as can be looked for in an age which had no critical records, and when writers, therefore, almost went out of their way to refer to their literary contemporaries, except for purposes of set compliment.

The belief was implicitly adopted by Dryden and Rowe, that the reputation of Shakspeare as a comic poet was distinctly recognised by Spenser in 1591. Shakspeare's great contemporary, in a poem, entitled "The Tears of the Muses," originally published in that year, describes, in

the "Complaint" of Thalia, the Muse of Comedy, the state of the drama at the time in which he is writing : —

" Where be the sweet delights of learning's treasure,
That wont with comic stock to beautify
The painted theatres, and fill with pleasure
The listeners' eyes, and ears with melody;
In which I late was wont to reign as queen,
And mask in mirth with graces well beseen?

O! all is gone; and all that goodly glee,
Which wont to be the glory of gay wits,
Is lay'd a-bed, and nowhere now to see;
And in her room unseemly Sorrow sits,
With hollow brows and grissly countenance,
Marring my joyous gentle dalliance. ♣

And him beside sits ugly Barbarism,
And brutish Ignorance, ycrept of late
Out of dread darkness of the deep abysm,
Where being bred, he light and heaven does hate;
They in the minds of men now tyrannize,
And the fair scene with rudeness foul disguise.

All places they with folly have possess'd,
And with vain toys the vulgar entertain;
But me have banished, with all the rest
That whilom wont to wait upon my train, —
Fine Counterfesance, and unhurtful Sport,
Delight, and Laughter, deck'd in seemly sort."

Spenser was in England in 1590-1, and it is probable, that "The Tears of the Muses" was written in 1590, and that the poet described the prevailing state of the drama in London during the time of his visit. We have tolerable evidence

That the performances of the company at the Blackfriars Theatre, of which Shakspeare was then a shareholder, were exceptions to the character of the general performances. But there were several other theatres in London. In some of these their licence to entertain the people was abused by the introduction of matters connected with religion and politics; so that, in 1589, Lord Burghley not only directed the lord mayor to inquire what companies of players had offended, but a commission was appointed for the same purpose. How Shakspeare's company proceeded during this inquiry has been made out most clearly by the valuable document discovered at Bridgewater House by Mr. Collier, wherein they disclaim to have conducted themselves amiss.

In this petition, Shakspeare, a sharer in the theatre, but with others below him in the list, says, and they all say, that "they have never brought into their plays matters of state and religion." The public mind in 1589-90, was furiously agitated by "matters of state and religion." A controversy was going on which is now known as that of *Martin Marprelate*, in which the constitution and discipline of the church were most furiously attacked in a succession of pamphlets; and they were defended with equal violence and scurrility. Izaak Walton says,—"There was not only one Martin Marprelate, but other venomous books daily printed and dispersed — books that were so absurd and

scurrilous, that the graver divines disdained them an answer." Walton adds, — "And yet these were grown into high esteem with the common people, till Tom Nashe appeared against them all, who was a man of a sharp wit, and the master of a scoffing, satirical, merry pen." Connected with this controversy, there was, subsequently, a more personal one between Nashe and Gabriel Harvey; but they were each engaged in the Marprelate dispute. Nashe was a writer for the theatre, and so was John Lyly, the author of one of the most remarkable pamphlets produced on this occasion, called "Pap with a Hatchet." Harvey, it must be observed, was the intimate friend of Spenser; and in a pamphlet which he dates from Trinity Hall, November 5. 1589, he thus attacks the author of "Pap with a Hatchet," the more celebrated Euphuist, whom Sir Walter Scott's novel has made familiar to us: —

"I am threatened with a bable, and Martin menaced with a comedy — a fit motion for a jester and a player to try what may be done by employment of his faculty. Bables and comedies are parlous fellows to decipher and discourage men (that is the point) with their witty flouts and learned jerks, enough to lash any man out of countenance. Nay, if you shake the painted scabbard at me, I have done; and all you that tender the preservation of your good names were best to please Pap-Hatchet, and fee Euphuus betimes, for fear lest he be moved, or some one

of his apes hired, to make a play of you, and then is your credit quite undone for ever and ever. Such is the public reputation of their plays. He must needs be discouraged whom they decipher. Better anger an hundred other than two such that have the stage at commandment, and can furnish out vices and devils at their pleasure." *

We thus see that Harvey, the friend of Spenser, is threatened by one of those who "have the stage at commandment" with having a play made of him. Such plays were made in 1589, and Nashe thus boasts of them in one of his tracts printed in 1589: — "Methought *Vetus Comædia* began to prick him at London in the right vein, when he brought forth Divinity with a scratched face, holding of her heart as if she were sick, because Martin would have forced her; but missing of his purpose, he left the print of his nails upon her cheeks, and poisoned her with a vomit which he ministered unto her to make her cast up her dignities." Lyly, taking the same side, writes, — "Would those comedies might be allowed to be played that are penned, and then I am sure he [Martin Marprelate] would be deciphered, and so perhaps discouraged." Here are the very words which Harvey has repeated, — "He must needs be *discouraged* whom they decipher." Harvey, in a subsequent passage of

* Pierce's "Supererogation." Reprinted in "Archæca," p. 137.

the same tract, refers to this prostitution of the stage to party purposes in very striking words : — “The stately tragedy scorneth the trifling comedy, and the trifling comedy flouteth the new ruffianism.” These circumstances appear to us very remarkable, with reference to the state of the drama about 1590 ; and we hope that we do not attach any undue importance to them from the consideration that we were the first to point out their intimate relation with Spenser’s “Tears of the Muses,” and the light which, as it appears to us, that poem *thus viewed* throws upon the dramatic career of Shakspeare.*

The four stanzas which we have quoted from Spenser are descriptive, as we think, of a period of the drama when it had emerged from the semi-barbarism by which it was characterised ; “from the commencement of Shakspeare’s boyhood, till about the earliest date at which his removal to London can be possibly fixed.”† This description has nothing in common with those accounts of the drama which have reference to this “semi-barbarism.” Nor does the writer of it belong to the school which considered a violation of the unities of time and place as the great defect of the English theatre. Nor does he assert his preference of the classic school over the romantic, by objecting, as Sir Philip Sidney objects, that “plays be neither right tragedies

* Life of Shakspeare in “Store of Knowledge.”

† Edinburgh Review, vol. lxi., p. 469.

nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns." There had been, according to Spenser, a state of the drama that would

" Fill with pleasure
The listeners' eyes, and ears with melody."

Can any comedy be named, if we assume that Shakspeare had, in 1590, not written any, which could be celebrated—and by the exquisite versifier of The "Fairy Queen"—for its "melody?" Could any also be praised for

" That goodly glee
Which wont to be the glory of gay wits?"

Could the plays before Shakspeare be described by the most competent of judges—the most poetical mind of that age next to Shakspeare—as abounding in

" Fine Counterfessance, and unhurtful Sport,
Delight, and Laughter, deck'd in seemly sort?"

We have not seen such a comedy, except some three or four of Shakspeare's, which could have existed before 1590; we do not believe there is such a comedy from any other pen. What, according to the "Complaint" of Thalia, has banished such comedy? "Unseemly Sorrow," it appears, has been fashionable;—not the proprieties of tragedy, but a Sorrow

" With *hollow brows* and *grissly* countenance;"—
the violent scenes of blood which were offered for the excitement of the multitude, before the

tragedy of real art was devised. But this state of the drama is shortly passed over. There is something more defined. By the side of this false tragic, sit "ugly Barbarism and brutish Ignorance." These are not the barbarism and ignorance of the *old stage*; — they are

"Ycrept of late

Out of dread darkness of the deep abysm."

They "*now* tyrannise;" they now "*disguise*" the fair scene "*with rudeness.*" This description was published in 1591; it was probably written in 1590. The Muse of Tragedy, Melpomene, had previously described the "*rueful spectacles*" of "*the stage.*" It was a stage which had no "*true tragedy.*" But it *had* possessed

"Delight, and Laughter, deck'd in seemly sort."

Now "*the trifling comedy flouteth the new ruffianism.*" The words of Gabriel Harvey and Edmund Spenser agree in this. The bravos that "*have the stage at commandment can furnish out vices and devils at their pleasure,*" says Harvey. This describes the *Vetus Comœdia*—the old comedy—of which Nashe boasts. Can there be any doubt that Spenser had this state of things in view when he denounced the

"Ugly Barbarism,

And brutish Ignorance, ycrept of late

Out of dread darkness of the deep abysm?"

He denounced it in common with his friend Harvey, who, however he partook of the contro-

versal violence of his time, was a man of learning and eloquence; and to whom, only three years before, he had addressed a sonnet of which the highest mind in the country might have been proud.

But we must return to the "Thalia." The four stanzas which we have quoted are immediately followed by these four others:—

" All these, and all that else the comic stage
 With season'd wit and goodly pleasure grac'd,
 By which man's life in his likest image
 Was limned forth, are wholly now defac'd;
 And those sweet wits, which wont the like to frame,
 Are now despis'd, and made a laughing game.

And he, the man whom Nature self had made
 To mock herself and Truth to imitate,
 With kindly counter, under mimic shade,
 Our pleasant Willy, ah! is dead of late:
 With whom all joy and jolly merriment
 Is also deaded, and in dolour drent.

Instead thereof scoffing Scurrility,
 And scornful Folly, with Contempt, is crept,
 Rolling in rhymes of shameless ribaldry,
 Without regard of due decorum kept;
 Each idle wit at will presumes to make,
 And doth the Learned's task upon him take.

But that same gentle spirit, from whose pen
 Large streams of honey and sweet nectar flow,
 Scorning the boldness of such base-born men,
 Which dare their follies forth so rashly throw,
 Doth rather choose to sit in idle cell
 Than so himself to mockery to sell."

Here there is something even stronger than what has preceded it, in the direct allusion to the state of the stage in 1590. Comedy had ceased to be an exhibition of "seasoned wit," and "goodly pleasure;" it no longer showed "man's life in his likest image." Instead thereof, there was "Scurrility"—"scornful Folly"—"shameless Ribaldry;"—and "each idle wit"

"doth the Learned's task upon him take."

It was the task of "the Learned" to deal with the high subjects of religious controversy—the "matters of state and religion," with which the stage had meddled. Harvey had previously said, in the tract quoted by us, it is "a godly motion, when *interluders* leave penning their pleasurable plays to become zealous ecclesiastical writers." He calls Lyly more expressly, with reference to this meddling, "the foolmaster of the theatre." In this state of things the acknowledged head of the comic stage was silent for a time:—

"Hx, the man whom Nature self had made
To mock herself, and Truth to imitate,
With *kindly* counter, under mimic shade,
Our pleasant WILLY, ah! is dead of late."

And the author of "The Fairy Queen" adds,

"But that same *gentle* spirit, from whose pen
Large streams of honey and sweet nectar flow,
Scorning the boldness of such base-born men,
Which dare their follies forth so madly throw,
Doth rather choose to sit in idle cell
Than so himself to *mockery* to sell."

The love of personal abuse had driven out real comedy ; and there was *one* who, for a brief season, had left the madness to take its course. We cannot doubt that

“ HE, the man whom Nature self had made
To mock herself, and Truth to imitate,”

was *William Shakspeare*.

In 1592 was published a pamphlet, entitled “Groat’s worth of Wit,” a posthumous tract of the dramatist Robert Greene.

The entire pamphlet of Greene is, perhaps, one of the most extraordinary fragments of autobiography that the vanity or the repentance of a sinful man ever produced. The recital which he makes of his abandoned course of life involves not only a confession of crimes and follies which were common to a very licentious age, but of particular and especial depravities, which even to mention argues as much shamelessness as repentance. The portion, however, which relates to the subject before us stands alone, in conclusion, as a friendly warning out of his own terrible example : — “ To those gentlemen, his quondam acquaintance, that spend their wits in making plays, R. G. wisheth a better exercise, and wisdom to prevent his extremities.” To three of his quondam acquaintance the dying man addresses himself. To the first, supposed to be Marlowe — “ thou famous gracer of trage-

dians" — he speaks in words as terrible as came from

" that warning voice, which he who saw
Th' Apocalypse heard cry in heav'n aloud."

In exhorting his friend to turn from atheism, he ran the risk of consigning him to the stake, for Francis Kett was burnt for his opinions only three years before Greene's death. That Marlowe resented this address to him, we have the testimony of Chettle the editor of Greene's posthumous pamphlet. With his second friend, supposed to be Lodge, his plain speaking is much more tender: "Be advised, and get not many enemies by bitter words." He addresses the third, supposed to be Peele, as one "driven as myself to extreme shifts;" and he adds, "thou art unworthy better hap sith thou dependest on so mean a stay." What is the stay? "Making plays." The exhortation then proceeds to include the three "gentlemen, his quondam acquaintance that spend their wits in making plays." — "Base-minded men all three of you, if by my misery ye be not warned: for unto none of you, like me, sought those burs to cleave; those puppets, I mean, that speak from our mouths; those antics garnished in our colours." Up to this point the meaning is perfectly clear. The puppets, the antics, — by which names of course are meant the players, whom he held, and justly, to derive their chief importance from the labours of the

poet, in the words which they uttered and the colours with which they were, garnished, — had once cleaved to him like burs. But a change had taken place: “Is it not strange that I, to whom they all have been beholding — is it not like that you, to whom they all have been beholding, shall, were ye in that case that I am now, be, both, of them at once forsaken?” This is a lamentable picture of one whose powers, wasted by dissipation and enfeebled by sickness, were no longer required by those to whom they had once been serviceable. As he was forsaken, so he holds that his friends will be forsaken. And chiefly for what reason? “Yes, trust them not: for there is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that, with *his tiger’s heart wrapped in a player’s hide*, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank-verse as the best of you: and, being an absolute Johannes factotum, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country.” There can be no doubt that Shakspeare was here pointed at; that the starving man spoke with exceeding bitterness of the successful author; that he affected to despise him as a player; that, if “beautified with our feathers” had a stronger meaning than “garnished with our colours,” it conveyed a vague charge of borrowing from other poets; and that he, Greene, parodied a line from “*The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York*,” which we hold to be Shakspeare’s performance; and which does not differ, in any very material

degree from the third part of Henry VI. Greene proceeds to exhort his friends "to be employed in more profitable courses." — "Let these apes imitate your past excellence, and never more acquaint them with your admired inventions." — "Seek you better masters." It is perfectly clear that these words refer only to the players generally; and, possibly, to the particular company of which Shakspeare was a member. As such, and such only, must he take his share in the names which Greene applies to them, of "apes," — "rude grooms," — "buckram gentlemen," — "peasants," — and "painted monsters." It has been held that Greene intended to accuse Shakspeare of robbing him of the profits of his labour, by new-modelling a work originally produced by him. We shall notice this matter in another place. It is sufficient here to mention, that the editor of the posthumous attack apologised to the "upstart crow:" — "I am as sorry as if the original fault had been my fault, because myself hath seen his demeanour no less civil than he excellent in the quality he professes: besides, divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, that approves his art." This apology was not written by Chettle at some distant period; it came out in the same year with the pamphlet which contained the insult.

There was an indistinct echo of Greene's complaint, by some "R. B." in 1594: —

"Greene gave the ground to all who wrote upon him
Nay, more; the men that so eclips'd his fame
Purloin'd his plumes,—can they deny the same?"

We believe that never yet any great author appeared in the world who was not reputed, in the onset of his career, to be a plagiarist; or any great literary performance produced by one whose reputation had to be made, that was not held to be written by some one else than the man who did write it: there was some one behind the curtain—some mysterious assistant—whose possible existence was a consolation to the envious and malignant.

The passages in Spenser's "Tears of the Muses," and Greene's "Groat's worth of Wit," which it is morally impossible to apply to any other man than Shakspeare, are still only indirect evidence of the opinion which was formed of him when he was yet a very young writer. But a few years later we encounter the most *direct* testimony to his pre-eminence. He it was that, in 1598, was assigned his rank, not by any vague and doubtful compliment, not with any ignorance of what had been achieved by other men ancient and modern, but by the learned discrimination of a scholar; and that rank was with Homer, Hesiod, Euripides, Æschylus, Sophocles, Pindar, Phocylides, and Aristophanes amongst the Greeks; Virgil, Ovid, Horace, Silius-Italicus, Lucan, Lucretius, Ausonius, and Claudian amongst the

Latins ; and Sidney, Spenser, Daniel, Drayton, Warner, Marlowe, and Chapman amongst the English. According to the same authority, it was "in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakspeare" that "the sweet witty soul of Ovid lives." This praise was applied to his *Venus and Adonis*, and other poems. But, for his dramas, he is raised above every native contemporary and predecessor : "As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latins ; so Shakspeare among the English is *the most excellent* in both kinds for the stage." These are extracts with which many of our readers must be familiar. They are from "The Wits' Commonwealth" of Francis Meres, "Master of Arts of both Universities ;" a book largely circulated, and mentioned with applause by contemporary writers. The author delivers not these sentences as his own peculiar opinion ; he speaks unhesitatingly, as of a fact admitting no doubt, that Shakspeare, among the English, is the most excellent for Comedy and Tragedy. Does any one of the other "excellent" dramatic writers of that day rise up to dispute the assertion, galling, perhaps, to the self-love of some amongst them ? Not a voice is heard to tell Francis Meres that he has overstated the public opinion of the supremacy of Shakspeare. Thomas Heywood, one of this illustrious band, speaks of Meres as an approved good scholar ; and says that his account

of authors is learnedly done.* Heywood himself, indeed, in lines written long after Shakspeare's death, mentions him in stronger terms of praise than he applies to any of his contemporaries.† Lastly, Meres, after other comparisons of Shakspeare with the great writers of antiquity and of his own time, has these words, which nothing but a complete reliance upon the received opinion of his day could have warranted him in applying to any living man: "As Epius Stolo said that the Muses would speak with Plautus' tongue, if they would speak Latin; so I say that the Muses would speak with Shakspeare's fine filed phrase, if they would speak English."

Of the popularity of Shakspeare in his own day, the external evidence, such as it is, is more decisive than the testimony of any contemporary writer. He was at one and the same time the favourite of the people and of the Court. There is no record whatever known to exist of the public performances of Shakspeare's plays at his own theatres. Had such an account existed of the re-

* "Here I might take fit opportunity to reckon up all our English writers, and compare them with the Greek, French, Italian, and Latin poets, not only in their pastoral, historical, elegiacal, and heroical poems, but in their tragical and comical subjects, but it was my chance to happen on the like, learnedly done by an approved good scholar, in a book called 'Wits' Commonwealth,' to which treatise I wholly refer you, returning to our present subject." — *Apology for Actors*, 1612.

† *Hierarchy of Blessed Angels*, 1635.

ceipts at the Blackfriars and the Globe as Henslowe kept for his company, we should have known something precise of that popularity which was so extensive as to make the innkeeper of Bosworth, "full of ale and history," derive his knowledge from the stage of Shakspeare : —

"For when he would have said, King Richard died,
And call'd, A horse, a horse ! he Burbage cried."*

But the facts connected with the original publication of Shakspeare's plays sufficiently prove how eagerly they were for the most part received by the readers of the drama. From 1597 to 1600, ten of these plays were published from authentic copies, undoubtedly with the consent of the author. The system of publication did not commence before 1597 ; and, with four exceptions, it was not continued beyond 1600. Of these plays there were published, before the appearance of the collected edition of 1623, four editions of Richard II., six of The First Part of Henry IV., six of Richard III., four of Romeo and Juliet, six of Hamlet, besides repeated editions of the plays which were surreptitiously published — the maimed and imperfect copies described by the editors of the first folio. Of the thirty-six plays contained in the folio of 1623, only one-half was published, whether genuine or piratical, in the author's lifetime ; and it is by no means improbable that many of those which were originally published

* Bishop Corbet, who died in 1635.

with his concurrence were not permitted to be reprinted, because such publication might be considered injurious to the great theatrical property with which he was connected. But the constant demand for some of the plays is an evidence of their popularity which cannot be mistaken ; and is decisive as to the people's admiration of Shakspeare. As for that of the Court, the testimony, imperfect as it is, is entirely conclusive : —

“ Sweet Swan of Avon ! what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appear,
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames
That so did take Eliza and our James,”

is no vague homage from Jonson to the memory of his “beloved friend ;” but the record of a fact. The accounts of the revels at Court, between the years 1588 and 1604, the most interesting period in the career of Shakspeare, have not been discovered in the depositories for such papers. We have, indeed, memoranda of payments to her Majesty's players during this period, but nothing definite as to the plays represented. We know not what “so did take Eliza ;” but we are left in no doubt as to the attractions for “our James.” It appears from the Revels Book that, from Hallowmas-day, 1604, to the following Shrove Tuesday, there were thirteen plays performed before the King, eight of which were Shakspeare's, namely — Othello, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Measure for Measure, The Comedy

of Errors, Love's Labour's Lost, Henry V., and The Merchant of Venice twice, that being "again commanded by the King's Majesty." Not one of these, with the possible exception of Measure for Measure, was recommended by its novelty. The series of the same accounts is broken from 1605 to 1611; and then from Hallowmas-night to Shrove Tuesday, which appears to have been the theatrical season of the Court, six different companies of players contribute to the amusements of Whitehall and Greenwich by the performance of twelve plays. Of five which are performed by the King's players, two are by Shakspeare. The Tempest, and The Winter's Tale. If the records were more perfect, this proof of the admiration of Shakspeare in the highest circle would, no doubt, be more conclusive. As it is, it is sufficient to support this general argument.*

During the life of Shakspeare his surpassing popularity appears to have provoked no expression of envy from his contemporaries, no attempt to show that his reputation was built upon an unsolid foundation. Some of the later commentators upon Shakspeare, however, took infinite pains to prove that Jonson had ridiculed him during his life, and disparaged him after his death. Every one knows Fuller's delightful picture of the convivial exercises in mental strength between Jonson and Shakspeare:—"Many were the wit-

* "Extracts from the Accounts of the Revels at Court," by Peter Cunningham.

combats between Shakspeare and Ben Jonson. I behold them like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war. Master Jonson, like the former, was built far higher in learning, solid but slow in his performances; Shakspeare, like the latter, less in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention." Few would imagine that a passage such as this should have been produced to prove that there was a quarrel between Jonson and Shakspeare; that the wit-combats of these intellectual gladiators were the consequence of their habitual enmity. By the same perverse misinterpretation have the commentators sought to prove that, when Jonson, in his prologues, put forth his own theory of dramatic art, he meant to satirize the principles upon which Shakspeare worked. It is held that in the prologue to "Every Man in his Humour," acted in 1598 at Shakspeare's own theatre, Jonson especially ridicules the historical plays of Henry VI. and Richard III. :—

" With three rusty swords,
And help of some few foot and half-foot words,
Fight over York and Lancaster's long jars,
And in the tiring-house bring wounds to scars."

There is in another author a similar ridicule, and stronger, of the inadequacy of the stage to present a battle to the senses :—

" We shall much disgrace—
With four or five most vile and ragged foils,

Right ill-dispos'd in brawl ridiculous —
The name of Agincourt."

But Shakspeare himself was the author of this passage ; and he was thus the satirist of himself, as much as Jonson was his satirist, when he compared, in his prologue, the comedy of manners with the historical and romantic drama which had then such attractions for the people. Shakspeare's Chorus to Henry V., from which we have made the last extract, was written the year after the performance of Jonson's play. We recognise in it a candid admission of the good sense of Jonson, which at once shows that Shakspeare was the last to feel the criticism as a personal attack. Nothing, in truth, can be more absurd than the attempts to show, from supposed allusions in Jonson, that he was an habitual detractor of Shakspeare. The reader will find these "proofs of Jonson's malignity" brought forward, and dismissed with the contempt that they deserve, in a paper appended to Gifford's "Memoir of Jonson." The same acute critic had the merit of pointing out a passage in Jonson's "Poetaster," which, he says, "is as undoubtedly true of Shakspeare as if it were pointedly written to describe him." He further says, "It is evident that throughout the whole of this drama Jonson maintains a constant allusion to himself and his contemporaries," and that, consequently, the lines in question were intended for Shakspeare : —

“ That which he hath writ
Is with such judgment labour'd and distill'd
Through all the needful uses of our lives,
That, could a man remember but his lines,
He should not touch at any serious point,
But he might breathe his spirit out of him.

His learning savours not the school-like gloss
That most consists in echoing words and terms,
And soonest wins a man an empty name ;
Nor any long or far-fetch'd circumstance
Wrapp'd in the curious general'ties of art ;
But a direct and analytic sum
Of all the worth and first effects of art.
And for his poesy, 'tis so ramm'd with life,
That it shall gather strength of life, with being,
And live hereafter more admir'd than now.”*

The private opinion of Jonson with regard to Shakspeare would not be so much a reflection of the popular judgment as that of the critical few who would apply the tests of ancient art, not only to the art of Shakspeare, but to the art of that great body of writers who had founded the English drama upon a broader foundation than the precepts of Aristotle. The art of Jonson was opposed to the art of Shakspeare. He satisfied the few, but the many rejected him. There is a poem on Jonson's “*Sejanus*,” which shows how his learned harangues—paraphrases for the most part of the ancient writers—were received by the English people:—

* The Poetaster, Act v. Scene 1.

" When in the Globe's fair ring, our world's best stage,
I saw Sejanus, set with that rich foll,
I look'd the author should have borne the spoil
Of conquest from the writers of the age :
But when I view'd the people's beastly rage,
Bent to confound thy grave and learned toil,
That cost thee so much sweat, and so much oil,
My indignation I could hardly assuage."

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that Jonson, in his free conversations with Drummond of Hawthornden, in January, 1619, should say that "Shakspeare wanted art." When Jonson said this he was in no laudatory mood. Drummond heads his record of the conversation thus : "His censure of the English poets was this." Censure is here, of course, put for opinion ; although Jonson's opinions are by no means favourable to any one of whom he speaks. Spenser's stanzas pleased him not, or his matter ; Sir John Harrington's "Ariosto," under all translations, was the worst ; Abraham France was a fool ; Sidney did not keep a decorum in making every one speak as well as himself ; Shakspeare wanted art. And so, during two centuries, a mob of critics have caught up the word, and with the most knowing winks, and the most profound courtesies to each other's sagacity, have they echoed — "Shakspeare wanted art." But a cunning interpolator, who knew the temper of the critics, the anonymous editor of Cibber's "Lives of the Poets," took the "heads of a con-

versation " between Jonson and Drummond, prefixed to Drummond's works in 1711, and bestowed a few finishing touches upon them, after his own fashion. And thus, to the great joy of the denouncers of anachronisms, and other Shakspearean absurdities, as they are pleased to call them, we have read as follows for a hundred years :—" He said, Shakspeare wanted Art, *and sometimes Sense* ; for, in one of his plays, he brought in a number of men, saying they had suffered shipwreck in Bohemia, where is no sea near by 100 miles." Jonson, indeed, makes the observation upon the shipwreck in Bohemia, but without any comment upon it. It is found in another part of Drummond's record, quite separate from " Shakspeare wanted art ;" a casual remark, side by side with Jonson's gossip about Sidney's pimpled face and Raleigh's plagiaries. It was probably mentioned by Jonson as an illustration of some principle upon which Shakspeare worked ; and in the same way " Shakspeare wanted art " was in all likelihood explained by him, in producing instances of the mode in which Shakspeare's art differed from his (Jonson's) art. It is impossible to receive Jonson's words as any support of the absurd opinion so long propagated that Shakspeare worked without labour and without method. Jonson's own testimony, delivered five years after the conversation with Drummond, offers the most direct evidence against such a construction of his expression :—

" Yet must I not give Nature all : thy art,
 My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.
 For though the poet's matter Nature be,
 His art doth give the fashion : and that he
 Who casts to write a living line must sweat
 (Such as thine are), and strike the second heat
 Upon the Muses' anvil : turn the same
 (And himself with it) that he thinks to frame;
 Or, for the laurel, he may gain a scorn,—
 For a good poet's made as well as born :
 And such wert thou."

There can be no difficulty in understanding Jon-
 son's dispraise of Shakspeare, small as it was,
 when we look at the different characters of the
 two men. In his " Discoveries," written in his
 last years, there is the following passage:—" I
 remember, the players have often mentioned it
 as an honour to Shakspeare, that in his writing,
 whatsoever he penned, he never blotted out a
 line. My answer hath been, Would he had
 blotted a thousand. Which they thought a
 malevolent speech. I had not told posterity
 this, but for their ignorance, who chose that cir-
 cumstance to commend their friend by wherein
 he most faulted ; and to justify mine own candour :
 for I loved the man, and do honour his memory,
 on this side idolatry, as much as any. He was,
 indeed, honest, and of an open and free nature ;
 had an excellent phantasy, brave notions, and
 gentle expressions ; wherein he flowed with that
 facility, that sometimes it was necessary he
 should be stopped : Sufflaminandus erat, as Au-

gustus said of Haterius. His wit was in his own power ; would the rule of it had been so too." The players had said, in their preface to the first folio—" His mind and hand went together ; and what he thought he uttered with that easiness that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers." Jonson, no doubt, alludes to this assertion. But we are not, therefore, to understand that Shakspeare took no pains in perfecting what, according to the notion of his editors, he delivered with such easiness. The differences between the earlier and the later copies of some of his plays show, as we have repeatedly pointed out, the unremitting care and the exquisite judgment with which he revised his productions. The expression " without a blot " might, nevertheless, be perfectly true ; and the fact, no doubt, impressed upon the minds of Heminge and Condell what they were desirous to impress upon others, that Shakspeare was a writer of unequalled facility—" as he was a happy imitator of nature, he was a most gentle expresser of it." Jonson received this evidence of facility as a reproof to his own laborious mode of composition. He felt proud, and wisely so, of the commendations of his admirers, that his works cost him much sweat and much oil ; and when the players told him that Shakspeare never blotted out a line, he had his self-satisfied retort, " Would he had blotted a thousand." But this carelessness, as it appeared to Jonson,—this exuberant facility, as the

players thought,—was in itself no proof that Shakspeare did not elaborate his works with the nicest care. The same thing was said of Fletcher as of him. Humphrey Moseley, the publisher of Beaumont and Fletcher's works in 1647, says—“Whatever I have seen of Mr. Fletcher's own hand is free from interlining, and his friends affirm he never writ any one thing twice.” But the stationer does not put this forth as any proof of carelessness, for he most judiciously adds, “It seems he had that rare felicity to prepare and perfect all first in his own brain, to shape and attire his notions, to add or lop off before he committed one word to writing, and never touched pen till all was to stand as firm and immutable as if engraven in brass or marble.” This is the way, we believe, in which all works of great originality are built up. If Shakspeare blotted not a line, it was because he wrote not till he had laid the foundations, and formed the plan, and conceived the ornaments, of his wondrous edifices. The execution of the work was then an easy thing ; and the facility was the beautiful result of the previous labour.

But if Jonson expressed himself a little petulantly, and perhaps inconsiderately, about the boast of the players, surely nothing can be nobler than the hearty tribute which he pays to the memory of Shakspeare :—“I loved the man, and do honour his memory, on this side idolatry, as much as any.” Unquestionably this is language

which shows that the memory of Shakspeare was cherished by others even to idolatry ; so that Jonson absolutely adopts an apologetical tone in venturing an observation which can scarcely be considered disparaging—"he flowed with that facility, that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped." It was the facility that excited Jonson's critical comparison of Shakspeare with himself ; and it was in the same way that, when he wrote his noble verses "To the Memory of my Beloved Mr. William Shakespeare and what he hath left us," he could not avoid drawing a comparison between his own profound scholarship and Shakspeare's practical learning :—

"If I thought my judgment were of years,
 I should commit thee surely with thy peers,
 And tell how far thou didst our Lyly outshine,
 Or sporting Kyd, or Marlowe's mighty line.
 And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek,
 From thence to honour thee I will not seek
 For names: but call forth thund'ring Eschylus,
 Euripides, and Sophocles to us,
 Pacuvius, Accius, him of Cordova dead,
 To live again, to hear thy buskin tread,
 And shake a stage: or, when thy socks were on,
 Leave thee alone for the comparison
 Of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome
 Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.

Nature herself was proud of his designs,
 And joy'd to wear the dressing of his lines!
 Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,
 As, since, she will vouchsafe no other wit.

The merry Greek, tart Aristophanes,
 Neat Terence, witty Plautus, now not please;
 But antiquated and deserted lie,
 As they were not of Nature's family."

The interpretation of this passage is certainly not difficult. Its general sense is expressed by Gifford:—"Jonson not only sets Shakspeare above his contemporaries, but above the ancients whose works himself idolized, and of whose genuine merits he was perhaps a more competent judge than any scholar of his age." * The whole passage was unquestionably meant for praise, whatever opinion might be implied in it as to Shakspeare's learning. Looking to the whole construction and tendency of the passage, it may even be doubted whether Jonson intended to express a direct opinion as to Shakspeare's philological attainments. If we paraphrase the passage according to the common notion, it reads thus:—And although you knew little Latin and less Greek, to honour thee out of Latin and Greek I will not seek for names. According to this construction, the poet ought to have written, *because* "thou hadst small Latin," &c. But without any violence the passage may be read thus:—And *although* thou hadst in thy writings few images derived from Latin, and fewer from Greek authors, I will not thence (on that account) seek for names to honour thee, but call forth thun-

* Jonson's Works, vol. viii. p. 333.

dering *Æschylus*, &c. It is perfectly clear that Jonson meant to say, and not disparagingly, that Shakspeare was not an imitator. Immediately after the mention of *Aristophanes*, *Terence*, and *Plautus*, he adds,

“ Yet must I not give Nature all.”

The same tone of commendation was taken in Shakspeare's time by other writers. *Digges* says that he neither borrows from the Greeks, imitates the Latins, nor translates from vulgar languages. *Drayton* has these lines :—

“ Shakespeare, thou hadst as smooth a comic vein,
Fitting the sock, and in thy natural brain
As strong conception, and as clear a rage,
As any one that traffick'd with the stage.”*

To argue from such passages that the writers meant to reproach Shakspeare as an ignorant or even as an unlearned man, in the common sense of the word, was an absurdity that was not fully propounded to the world till the discovery of *Dr. Farmer*, that, because translations existed from Latin, Italian, and French authors in the time of Shakspeare, he was incapable of consulting the originals. This profound logician closes his judicial sentence with the following memorable

* *Farmer*, the most insolent of the race of piddling black-letter bibliographers, has the profligacy not to quote these lines, but to say, “ *Drayton*, the countryman and acquaintance of Shakspeare, determines his excellence to the natural brain *only*.”

words, which have become the true faith of the antiquarian critics up to this hour :—" He remembered perhaps enough of his schoolboy learning to put the Hig, hag, hog, into the mouth of Sir Hugh Evans ; and might pick up in the writers of the time, or the course of his conversation, a familiar phrase or two of French or Italian." There is, however, a contemporary testimony to the acquirements of Shakspeare which is of somewhat higher value than the assertions of any master " of all such reading as was never read "—of one, himself a true poet, who holds that all Shakspeare's excellences were his freehold, but that his cunning brain improved his natural gifts :—

" This and much more which cannot be express'd
But by himself, his tongue and his own breast,
Was Shakespeare's *freehold*, which his *cunning brain*
Improv'd by favour of the ninefold train.
The buskin'd Muse, the Comic Queen, the grand
And louder tone of Clio ; nimble hand,
And nimbler foot, of the melodious pair ;
The silver-voiced Lady ; the most fair
Calliope, whose speaking silence daunts,
And she whose praise the heavenly body chants ;—
These jointly woo'd him, envying one another,
(Obey'd by all as spouse, but lov'd as brother,)
And wrought a curious robe of sable grave,
Fresh green, and pleasant yellow, red most brave,
And constant blue, rich purple, guiltless white,
The lowly russet, and the scarlet bright ;
Branch'd and embrolder'd like the painted spring,
Each leaf match'd with a flower, and each string

Of golden wire, each line of silk ; there run
Italian works whose thread the sisters spun ;
And there did sing, or seem to sing, the choice
Birds of a foreign note and various voice.
Here hangs a mossy rock ; there plays a fair
But chiding fountain purred : not the air,
Nor clouds, nor thunder, but were living drawn,
Not out of common tiffany or lawn,
But fine materials, which the Muses know,
And only know the countries where they grow. ”*

But if the passage which we have previously quoted from “ The Poetaster ” be, as Gifford so plausibly imagined, intended for Shakspeare, it is decisive as to Jonson’s own opinion of his great friend’s acquirements : it is the opinion of every man, now, who is not a slave to the authority of the smallest minds that ever undertook to measure the vast poetical region of Shakspeare with their little tape, inch by inch : —

“ His learning savours not the school-like gloss
That most consists in echoing words and terms,
And soonest wins a man an empty name.”

The verses of Jonson, prefixed to the folio of 1623, conclude with these remarkable lines : —

“ Shine forth, thou star of poets, and with rage,
Or influence, chide, or cheer, the drooping stage ;
Which, since thy flight from hence, hath mourn’d like
night,
And despairs day, but for thy volume’s light.”

* Commendatory Verses, “ On Worthy Master Shakspeare and his Poems,” by I. M. S.

From 1616, the year of Shakspeare's death, to 1623, the date of the first edition of his collected works, Jonson himself had written nothing for the stage. Beaumont had died the year before Shakspeare; but Fletcher alone was sustaining the high reputation which he had won with his accomplished associate. Massinger had been in London from 1606, known certainly to have written in conjunction with other dramatists before the period of Shakspeare's death, and, without doubt, assisting to fill the void which he had left, for "The Bondman" appears in the list of the Master of the Revels in 1623. The indefatigable Thomas Heywood was a writer for the stage from the commencement of the seventeenth century to the suppression of the theatres. Webster was a poet of Shakspeare's own theatre, immediately after his death, and a leading character in "The Duchess of Malfi" was played by Burbage. Rowley produced some of his best works at the same period. Chapman had not ceased to write. Ford was known as a rising poet. Many others were there of genius and learning who at this particular time were struggling for the honours of the drama, and some with great success. And yet Jonson does not hesitate to say, that since the death of Shakspeare the stage mourns like night. Leonard Digges, writing at the date of the publication of the folio, says of Shakspeare's dramas,—

"Happy verse, thou shalt be sung and heard,
 When hungry quills shall be such honour barr'd.
 Then vanish, upstart writers to each stage,
 You needy poetasters of this age!"

This man speaks authoritatively, because he speaks the public voice. But it is not with the poetasters only that he compares the popularity of Shaksperc; he tells us that the players of the Globe live by him dead; and that prime judgments, rich veins,

"have far'd

The worst with this deceased man compar'd;"

and he then proceeds to exhibit the precise character of the popular admiration of Shaksperc:—

"So have I seen, when Cæsar would appear,
 And on the stage at half-sword parley were
 Brutus and Cassius, O, how the audience
 Were ravish'd! with what wonder they went thence!
 When, some new day, they would not brook a line
 Of tedious, though well-labour'd, Catiline;
 Sejanus too was irksome: they priz'd more
 'Honest' Iago, or the jealous Moor.
 And though the Fox and subtle Alchymist,
 Long intermitted, could not long be miss'd,
 Though these have sham'd all th' ancients, and might
 raise

Their author's merit with a crown of bays,
 Yet these sometimes, even at a friend's desire
 Acted, have scarce defray'd the sea-coal fire
 And door-keepers: when, let but Falstaff come,
 Hal, Poins, the rest,—you scarce shall have a room,
 All is so pester'd: Let but Beatrice
 And Benedict be seen, lo! in a trice

The cockpit, galleries, boxes, all are full,
To hear Malvolio, that cross-garter'd gull.
Brief, there is nothing in his wit-fraught book,
Whose sound we would not hear, on whose worth look :
Like old-coin'd gold, whose lines in every page
Shall pass true current to succeeding age."

We have said enough, we think, to show how inconsiderate is the assertion, that Shakspeare's "pre-eminence was not acknowledged by his contemporaries." Should this fact, however, be still thought to be a matter of opinion, we will place the opinion of a real critic, not the less sound for being an enthusiastic admirer, against this echo of the babble of the cold and arrogant school of criticism that still has its disciples and its imitators : "Clothed in radiant armour, and authorised by titles sure and manifold as a poet, Shakspeare came forward to demand the throne of fame, as the dramatic poet of England. *His excellences compelled even his contemporaries to seat him on that throne, although there were giants in those days contending for the same honour.*" *

CHAPTER II.

"SHAKESPEAR was not so much esteemed, even during his life, as we commonly suppose ; and

* Coleridge's "Literary Remains," vol. ii. p. 53.

after his retirement from the stage he was all but forgotten.”* So we read in an authority too mighty to enter upon evidence. The oblivion after his retirement and death is the true *pendant* to the neglect during his life. When did the oblivion begin? It could scarcely have existed when, in, 1623, an expensive folio volume of many hundred pages was published, without regard to the risk of such an undertaking — and it was a risk, indeed, if the author had been neglected and was forgotten. But the editors of the volume do not ask timidly for support of these neglected and forgotten works. They say to the reader, “Though you be a magistrate of wit, and sit on the stage at Blackfriars or the Cockpit, to arraign plays daily, know these plays have had their trial already, and stood out all appeals.” Did the oblivion continue when, in 1632, a second edition of this large work was brought out? There was one man, certainly — a young and ardent scholar — who was not amongst the oblivious. John Milton was twenty-four years of age when these verses were published: —

“AN EPITAPH ON THE ADMIRABLE DRAMATIC POET,
W. SHAKESPEARE.

“What need my Shakespeare for his honour'd bones
The labour of an age in piled stones,
Or that his hallow'd relics should be hid
Under a star-ypointing pyramid?

* Life of Shakspeare in “Lardner's Cyclopædia.”

Dear son of memory, great heir of fame,
What need'st thou such dull witness of thy name?
Thou in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built thyself a lasting monument.
For whilst to th' shame of slow-endeavouring art
Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book
Those Delphic lines with deep impression took,
Then thou, our fancy of herself bereaving,
Dost make us marble with too much conceiving,
And so sepulchred in such pomp dost lie,
That kings for such a tomb would wish to die."

The author of these lines could not have known the works of the "admirable dramatic poet," while that poet was in life; but sixteen years after his death he was the dear son of memory, the great heir of fame; his bones were honoured, his relics were hallowed, his works were a lasting monument, his book was priceless, his lines were oracular, Delphic. Is this oblivion? But it may be said that Milton was a young enthusiast, one who saw farther than the million; that the public opinion of a writer (and we are not talking of his positive excellence, apart from opinion) must be sought for in the voice of the people, or at any rate in that of the leaders of the people. How are we to arrive at the knowledge of this expression? We can only know, incidentally, that an author was a favourite, either of a king or of a cobbler. We know that Shakspeare was the favourite of a king, in these times of his oblivion. A distinguished writer says, "The Prince of

Wales had learned to appreciate Shakspeare, not originally from reading him, but from witnessing the court representations of his plays at Whitehall. Afterwards we know that he made Shakspeare his closet companion, for he was reproached with doing so by Milton." * The concluding words are founded upon a mistake of the passage in Milton. Charles is not *reproached* with reading Shakspeare. The great republican does not condemn the king for having made the dramatic poet the closet companion of his solitudes; but, speaking of the dramatic poet as a well-known author with whom the king was familiar, he cites out of him a passage to show that pious words might be found in the mouth of a tyrant. The passage not only proves the familiarity of Charles with Shakspeare, but it evidences also Milton's familiarity; and, what is of more importance, the familiarity even of those stern and ascetic men to whom Milton was peculiarly addressing his opinions. The passage of the "Iconoclastes" is as follows: "Andronicus Comnenus, the Byzantine emperor, though a most cruel tyrant, is reported by Nicetas to have been a constant reader of Saint Paul's epistles; and by continual study had so incorporated the phrase and style of that transcendent apostle into all his familiar letters, that the imitation seemed to vie with the original. Yet this availed not to deceive the

* Mr. De Quincey's "Life of Shakespeare" in the "Encyclopædia Britannica."

people of that empire, who, notwithstanding his saint's vizard tore him to pieces for his tyranny. From stories of this nature, both ancient and modern, which abound, the poets also, and some English, have been in this point so mindful of decorum as to put never more pious words in the mouth of any person than of a tyrant. I shall not instance an abstruse author, wherein the king might be less conversant, but one whom we well know was the closet companion of these his solitudes, William Shakespeare, who introduces the person of Richard the Third, speaking in as high a strain of piety and mortification as is uttered in any passage of this book *, and sometimes to the same sense and purpose with some words in this place: 'I intended,' saith he, 'not only to oblige my friends, but my enemies.' The like saith Richard, Act II., Scene I. —

'I do not know that Englishman alive
With whom my soul is any jot at odds,
More than the infant that is born to-night;
I thank my God for my humillity.'

Other stuff of this sort may be read throughout the whole tragedy, wherein the poet used not much licence in departing from the truth of history, which delivers him a deep dissembler, not of his affections only, but of religion." It was a traditionary blunder, which Warton received and transmitted to his successors, that

* Milton here refers to the first section of the "Elkon Basilike."

Milton reproached Charles with reading Shakspeare, and thus inferred that Shakspeare was no proper closet companion. The passage has wholly the contrary tendency ; and he who thinks otherwise may just as well think that the phrase "*other stuff* of this sort " is also used disparagingly.

A few years before — that is in 1645 — Milton had offered another testimony to Shakspeare in his "*L'Allegro*," then published : —

" Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learned sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild."

Milton was not afraid to publish these lines, even after the suppression of the theatre by his own political party. That he went along with them in their extreme polemical opinions it is impossible to believe ; but he would nevertheless be careful not to mention, in connexion with the stage, names of any doubtful eminence. He was not ashamed to say that the learning of Jonson, the nature of Shakspeare, had for him attractions, though the stage was proscribed. This contrast of the distinguishing qualities of the two men is held to be one amongst the many proofs of Shakspeare's want of learning ; as if it was not absolutely essential to the whole spirit and conception of the passage that the learning of Jonson, thus pointed out as his leading quality, should be contrasted with the higher quality of Shakspeare — that quality which was assigned him as the

greatest praise by his immediate contemporaries — his nature. No one can doubt of Milton's affection for Shakspeare, and of his courage in avowing that affection, living as he was in the heat of party opinion which was hostile to all such excellence. We have simply "Jonson's learned sock;" but the "native wood-notes wild" of Shakspeare are associated with the most endearing expressions. He is "sweetest Shakespear," he is "Fancy's child." In his later years, after a life of contention and heavy responsibility, Milton still clung to his early delights. The "Theatrum Poetarum," which bears the name of his nephew Edward Phillips, is held to have received many touches from Milton's pen.* At any rate it is natural that it should represent Milton's opinions. It is not alone what is here said of Shakspeare, but of Shakspeare in comparison with the other great dramatic poets of his age, that is important. Take a few examples: —

"BENJAMIN JONSON, the most learned, judicious, and correct, generally so accounted, of our English comedians, and the more to be admired for being so, for that neither the height of natural parts, for he was no Shakespear, nor the cost of extraordinary education, for he is reported but a bricklayer's son, but his own proper industry and addiction to books, advanced him to this perfection: in three of his comedies, namely, 'The

* The "Theatrum Poetarum" was published in 1675, the year after Milton's death.

Fox,' 'Alchymist,' and 'Silent Woman,' he may be compared, in the judgment of learned men, for decorum, language, and well humouring of the parts, as well with the chief of the ancient Greek and Latin comedians as the prime of modern Italians, who have been judged the best of Europe for a happy vein in comedies, nor is his 'Bartholomew Fair' much short of them; as for his other comedies, 'Cynthia's Revels,' 'Poetaster,' and the rest, let the name of Ben Jonson protect them against whoever shall think fit to be severe in censure against them: the truth is, his tragedies 'Sejanus' and 'Catiline' seem to have in them more of an artificial and inflate than of a pathological and naturally tragic height."

"CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE, a kind of second Shakespear (whose contemporary he was), not only because like him he rose from an actor to be a maker of plays, though inferior both in fame and merit; but also because, in his begun poem of 'Hero and Leander,' he seems to have a resemblance of that clean and unsophisticated wit which is natural to that incomparable poet."

"GEORGE CHAPMAN, a poetical writer, flourishing in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James, in that repute both for his translations of 'Homer' and 'Hesiod,' and what he wrote of his own proper genius, that he is thought not the meanest of English poets of that time, and particularly for his dramatic writings."

"JOHN FLETCHER, one of the happy triumvirate

(the other two being Jonson and Shakespear) of the chief dramatic poets of our nation in the last foregoing age, among whom there might be said to be a symmetry of perfection, while each excelled in his peculiar way: Ben Jonson, in his elaborate pains and knowledge of authors; Shakespear, in his pure vein of wit, and natural poesy height; Fletcher, in a courtly elegance and genteel familiarity of style, and withal a wit and invention so overflowing, that the luxuriant branches thereof were frequently thought convenient to be lopped off by his almost incomparable companion Francis Beaumont."

"WILLIAM SHAKESPEAR, the glory of the English stage; whose nativity at Stratford-upon-Avon is the highest honour that town can boast of: from an actor of tragedies and comedies, he became a maker; and such a maker, that, though some others may perhaps pretend to a more exact decorum and economy, especially in tragedy, never any expressed a more lofty and tragic height, never any represented nature more purely to the life; and where the polishments of art are most wanting, as probably his learning was not extraordinary, he pleaseth with a certain wild and native elegance; and in all his writings hath an unvulgar style, as well in his 'Venus and Adonis,' his 'Rape of Lucrece,' and other various poems, as in his dramatics."

Half a century had elapsed, when these critical opinions were published, from the time when Ben

Jonson had apostrophized Shakspeare as "soul of the age." Whatever qualification we may here find in the praise of Shakspeare, it is unquestionable that the critic sets him above all his contemporaries. Benjamin Jonson was "learned, judicious, and correct," but "he was no Shakespear." Marlowe was "a kind of a second Shakespear;" and his greatest praise is, that "he seems to have a resemblance of that clean and unsophisticated wit which is natural to that incomparable poet." Chapman is "not the meanest" of his time. Fletcher is "one of the happy triumvirate, the other two being Jonson and Shakespear;" but the peculiar excellence of each is discriminated in a way which leaves no doubt as to which the critic meant to hold superior. But there are no measured words applied to the character of Shakspeare. He is "the glory of the English stage"—"never any expressed a more lofty and tragic height, never any represented nature more purely to the life." We can understand what a pupil of Milton, bred up in his school of severe study and imitation of the ancients, meant, when he says, "Where the polishments of art are most wanting, as probably his learning was not extraordinary, he pleases with a certain wild and native elegance." Here is no accusation that the learning was wholly absent; and that this absence produced the common effects of want of cultivation. Shakspeare, "in all his writings, hath an *unvulgar* style." In the preface to

this valuable little book—which preface is a composition eloquent enough to have been written by Milton himself—there is a passage which is worthy of special observation in connection with what we have already quoted: “If it were once brought to a strict scrutiny, who are the right, genuine, and true-born poets, I fear me our number would fall short, and there are many that have a fame deservedly for what they have writ, even in poetry itself, who if they came to the test, I question how well they would endure to hold open their eagle eyes against the sun: wit, ingenuity, and learning in verse, even elegance itself, though that comes nearest, are one thing, true native poetry is another; in which there is a certain air and spirit, which perhaps the most learned and judicious in other arts do not perfectly apprehend, much less is it attainable by any study or industry; nay, though all the laws of heroic poem, all the laws of tragedy were exactly observed, yet still this *tour entregent*, this poetic energy, if I may so call it, would be required to give life to all the rest, which shines through the roughest, most unpolished and antiquated language, and may haply be wanting in the most polite and reformed. Let us observe Spenser, with all his rusty obsolete words, with all his rough-hewn clousterly verses; yet take him throughout, and we shall find in him a graceful and poetic majesty: in like manner, Shakespear, in spite of all his unfiled expressions, his rambling

and indigested fancies, the laughter of the critical, yet must be confessed a poet above many that go beyond him in literature some degrees." Taking the whole passage in connection, and looking also at the school of art in which the critic was bred, it is impossible to receive this opinion as regards Shakspeare in any other light than as one of enthusiastic admiration. It is important to note the period in which this admiration was publicly expressed. It was fifteen years after the Restoration of Charles II., when we had a new school of poetry and criticism in England ; when the theatres were in a palmy state as far as regarded courtly and public encouragement. The natural association of these opinions with those of Milton's youth has led us to leap over the interval which elapsed between the close of the Shakspearean drama and the rise of the French school. We desired to show the continuity of opinion in Milton, and in Milton's disciples, that had prevailed for forty years ; during a large portion of which civil war and polemical strife had well nigh banished poetry and the sister arts from England ; and dramatic poetry, especially, was proscribed by a blind fanaticism, wholly and irredeemably, without discrimination between its elevating and its debasing influence upon the public morals. Milton himself had left "a calm and pleasing solitariness, fed with cheerful and confident thoughts, to embark in a troubled sea of noises and hoarse disputes." Let us retrace our steps, and glance a little at the prelude to this period.

In 1633 was published the celebrated "**Histrio-Mastix, the Player's Scourge**," of William Prynne. In the epistle dedicatory to the benchers of Lincoln's Inn, he says, that about seven years before he had set down all the play-condemning passages which he recollected in the Fathers and other authors, and that he had since enlarged the intended bulk of this discourse, "because I saw the number of players, play-books, play-haunters, and play-houses still increasing, there being above forty thousand play-books printed within these two years, as stationers inform me." In his address to the Christian reader he has a distinct allusion to the popularity of Shakspeare's collected works: "Some play-books since I first undertook this subject are grown from quarto into folio, which yet bear so good a price and sale, that I cannot but with grief relate it, they are now new printed in far better paper than most octavo or quarto bibles, which hardly find such vent as they." The two folio editions of Shakspeare are the only play-books grown from quarto to folio to which the zealous puritan can allude, with the exception of Jonson's own edition of his plays, completed in 1631; those of Beaumont and Fletcher were not collected till 1647. The very fact of the publication of the two first folios of Shakspeare is a proof of his popularity with general readers. They were not exclusively the studies of the scholar, such as Milton, or of the play-haunters whom Prynne denounces. A letter in the Bodleian Library, written by a Dr. James,

about this period, testifies how generally they were read: "A young gentle lady of your acquaintance, having read the works of Shakspere, made me this question," &c.* When the London theatres were provided with novelties in such abundance that, according to Prynne, "one study was scarce able to hold the new play-books," the plays of Shakspere were still in such demand for the purposes of the stage, that his successors in the theatrical property of the Globe and Blackfriars found it their interest to preserve the monopoly of their performance (which they had so long enjoyed), by a handsome gratuity to the Master of the Revels. There is this entry in the office-book of Sir Henry Herbert, in 1627: "Received from Mr. Heming, in their company's name, to forbid the playing of Shakespeare's plays to the Red Bull Company, five pounds." The people clearly had not yet forgotten the "delight and wonder of the stage." Fletcher, Massinger, Shirley, were newer favourites; but the people could not forget Shakspere. Neither was he forgotten by the great. In the very year of the publication of Prynne's book — when St. James's and Whitehall were brilliant with the splendid revelries of an elegant court, and the queen herself took part in the masques and pageantries, — the indecent allusion to which cost Prynne his ears — the name of Shakspere was as familiar

* See Mr. Halliwell's "Character of Falstaff," p. 19.

to the royal circle as in the days of James. From the seventeenth of November to the sixth of January, there were eight performances at St. James's and Whitehall, three of which were plays of Shakspeare : namely, Richard III., Taming of the Shrew, and Cymbeline ; and Sir Henry Herbert records of the last, " well liked by the king." * These office accounts have great *lacunæ* ; but, wherever we find them during the reign of Charles, there we find a record of the admiration of Shakspeare.

Dryden lived near enough to the times of Charles I. to be good evidence as to the judgment which the higher circles formed of Shakspeare ; after the Restoration he was intimate with men who had moved in those circles. His " Essay on Dramatic Poesy," which was first printed in 1668, contains the following passage, which has been often cited. Dryden is speaking in his own person, in an imaginary conversation in which the Earl of Dorset bears a part : " To begin, then, with Shakspeare. He was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily : when he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning give him the greater commenda-

* See Malone's " Historical Account of the English Stage."

tion : he was naturally learned ; he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature ; he looked inwards, and found her there. I cannot say he is everywhere alike ; were he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of mankind. He is many times flat, insipid, his comic wit degenerating into clenches, his serious swelling into bombast. But he is always great when some great occasion is presented to him ; no man can say he ever had a fit subject for his wit, and did not then raise himself as high above the rest of poets,

Quantum lepta solent inter viburna cupressi.

The consideration of this made Mr. Hales of Eton say, that there was "no subject of which any poet ever writ, but he would produce it much better done in Shakspeare ; and, however others are now generally preferred before him, yet the age wherein he lived, which had contemporaries with him, Fletcher and Jonson, never equalled them to him in their esteem : and in the last king's court, when Ben's reputation was at highest, Sir John Suckling, and with him the greater part of the courtiers, set our Shakspeare far above him." No testimony can be more positive than this, that the two greatest contemporaries of Shakspeare never equalled him in the public estimation during his own time ; and that in the succeeding period of Charles I., when the reputation of Jonson was at the highest, Suckling, one of the wittiest and

sprightliest of men, and the greater part of the courtiers set Shakspeare far above him. But it was not the gay alone, according to Dryden, who thus revered Shakspeare. He tells us what was the opinion of "Mr. Hales of Eton." John Hales, a Fellow of Eton, is known as the "learned" Hales, and the "ever-memorable" Hales; and of him, Aubrey says, "When the court was at Windsor the learned courtiers much delighted in his company." His opinion of Shakspeare is given with more particularity by Gildon, in an Essay addressed to Dryden in 1694, in which he appeals to Dryden himself as the relator of the anecdote. It is not because Gildon is satirized in "The Dunciad" that his veracity is to be questioned: * — "But to give the world some satisfaction that Shakspeare has had as great veneration paid his excellence by men of unquestioned parts as this I now express for him, I shall give some account of what I have heard from your mouth, Sir, about the noble triumph he gained over all the ancients, by the judgment of the ablest critics of that time. The matter of fact, if my memory fail me not, was this. Mr. Hales of Eton affirmed, that he would show all the poets of antiquity outdone by Shakspeare, in all the topics and common places made use of in poetry. The enemies of Shakspeare would by no means yield him so much excellence; so that it came to a

* See Gifford's "Memoirs of Jonson," p. cclx.

resolution of a trial of skill upon that subject. The place agreed on for the dispute was Mr. Hales's chamber at Eton. A great many books were sent down by the enemies of this poet ; and on the appointed day my Lord Falkland, Sir John Suckling, and all the persons of quality that had wit and learning, and interested themselves in the quarrel, met there ; and upon a thorough disquisition of the point, the judges chosen by agreement out of this learned and ingenious assembly, unanimously gave the preference to Shakspeare, and the Greek and Roman poets were adjudged to veil at least their glory in that to the English hero."

From the death of Shakspeare to the shutting up of the theatres in 1642, a period is embraced of twenty-six years. We have seen the prodigious activity in the production of novelties which existed ten years before the suppression of the theatres. There is too much reason to know that the stage has acquired a more licentious tone after Shakspeare's time ; and although the puritans were over-zealous in their indiscriminating violence against all theatrical performances, there is just cause to believe that the senses of the people were stimulated by excitements of plot and character, mingled with profane and licentious language, much more than in the days when Shakspeare rested for his attractions on a large exhibition of natural passion and true wit ; and when he produced play after play, history, comedy,

tragedy—"works truly excellent and capable of enlarging the understanding, warming and purifying the heart, and placing in the centre of the whole being the germs of noble and manlike actions."* The nation was much divided then, as it was long afterwards, between the followers of extreme opinions in morals—the over-strict on one hand, the wholly careless on the other. Prynne tells us that, upon his first arrival in London, he had "heard and seen in four several plays, to which the pressing importunity of some ill acquaintance drew me whiles I was yet a novice, such wickedness, such lewdness. as then made my penitent heart to loathe, my conscience to abhor, all stage-plays ever since." Prynne left Oxford and came to London after 1620. Fletcher was then the living idol of the theatre; and any one who is acquainted with his plays, full of genius as they are, must admit that Prynne had too much cause for his disgust. In the office-book of Sir Henry Herbert, in 1633, we find the following curious entry: "The comedy called 'The Young Admiral,' being free from oaths, profaneness, or obscenity, hath given me much delight and satisfaction in the reading, and may serve for a pattern to other poets." The play was Shirley's. But six months after there is a still more curious entry in the same book: "This morning, being the 9th of January, 1633, [1634]

* Coleridge.

the king was pleased to call me into his withdrawing chamber to the window, where he went over all that I had crossed in Davenant's play-book, and, allowing of *faith* and *slight* to be asseverations only and no oaths, marked them to stand, and some other few things, but in the greater part allowed of my reformati^ons. This was done upon a complaint of Mr. Endymion Porter's, in December. The king is pleased to take *faith*, *death*, *slight*, for asseverations, and no oaths, to which I do humbly submit as my master's judgment; but under favour conceive them to be oaths, and enter them here, to declare my opinion and submission." But it was not the striking out of the asseveration, or even of the oaths, which could purify the plays of that period. Their principal demoralizing power consisted in their false representations of human character and actions. Take for example "the frightful contrasts," as they have justly been called, between the women of Beaumont and Fletcher and those of Shakspeare. *He* kept at all times in the high road of life. He "has no innocent adulteries, no interesting incests, no virtuous vice; he never renders that amiable which religion and reason alike teach us to detest, or clothes impurity in the garb of virtue, like Beaumont and Fletcher, the Kotzebues of the day."* But this very truth and purity of Shakspeare must have greatly diminished his attractions,

* Coleridge's "Literary Remains," vol. II. p. 79.

'amidst a crowd who wrote upon opposite principles. Nothing but the unequalled strength of his artistic power could have preserved the unbroken continuance of his supremacy.

And this leads us to the consideration of another cause why the popular admiration of him would have been diminished and interrupted within a very few years after his death, and certainly long before the suppression of the theatres, if his excellences had not so completely triumphed over every impediment to his enduring popular fame. His plays were to a certain extent mixed up with the reputation of the actors by whom they were originally represented. In that curious play "The Return from Parnassus," which was acted by the students in St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1606, and which was clearly written by an academical person inclined to satirize the popular poets and players of his day, Kempe is thus made to address two scholars who want lessons in the histrionic art: "Be merry, my lads; you have happened upon the most excellent vocation in the world for money; they come north and south to bring it to our playhouse; and for honours, who of more report than Dick Burbage and Will Kempe? He is not counted a gentleman that knows not Dick Burbage and Will Kempe: there's not a country wench that can dance Sellenger's Round, but can talk of Dick Burbage and Will Kempe." Here we have a testimony to the wide-spread popularity of two

of the original representatives of Shakspeare's clowns and heroes. Kempe died before Shakspeare; Burbage within three years after him. Burbage is almost identified with some of Shakspeare's greatest characters, and especially with Richard III.; and yet the attraction of the great tragic plays died not with Burbage. Before the suppression of the theatres this actor had his immediate successors; and during the eighteen years in which the theatres were closed, the original hits and points of the Richards, and Hamlets, and Macbeths, and Lears, were diligently recorded; and immediately after the Restoration actors again arose, ambitious to realize the mighty conceptions of the great master of the dramatic art. During the period when the theatres were shut, the readers of plays would still be numerous, and they probably would be most found among the younger men who had a vivid recollection of the representations of the successors of Shakspeare. We can understand what the later taste was, by the mode in which Shirley, in his preface to the collated edition of Beaumont and Fletcher, in 1647, speaks of these writers: — "Whom but to mention is to throw a cloud upon all former names, and benight posterity; this book being, without flattery, the greatest monument of the scene that time and humanity have produced, and must live, not only the crown and sole reputation of our own, but the stain of all other nations and languages; for it may be

boldly averred, not one indiscretion hath branded this paper in all the lines, this being the authentic wit that made Blackfriars an academy, where the three hours' spectacle, while Beaumont and Fletcher were presented, was usually of more advantage to the hopeful young heir, than a costly, dangerous, foreign travel, with the assistance of a governing monsieur or signor to boot ; and it cannot be denied but that the young spirits of the time, whose birth and quality made them impatient of the sourer ways of education, have from the attentive hearing these pieces, got ground in point of wit and carriage of the most severely employed students, while these recreations were digested into rules, and the very pleasure did edify. How many passable discoursing dining wits stand yet in good credit, upon the bare stock of two or three of these single scenes!" This is a low estimate of the power and capacity of the drama ; and one which is a sufficient evidence of a declining taste amongst those who were perforce contented with reading plays during the silence of the stage. From "the greatest monument of the scene that time and humanity have produced," was to be learned what was of more advantage "than a costly, dangerous, foreign travel." Hence were to be acquired "wit and carriage," and "dining wits stand yet in good credit" by passing off the repartees of these dramatists as their own. Shirley knew the character of those whom he addressed in this pre-

face. In the contentions of that tragical age few of the serious thinkers would open a play-book at all. To the gay cavaliers, Beaumont and Fletcher would perhaps be more welcome than Shakspeare; and Shirley tells us the grounds upon which they were to be admired. But assuredly this is not oblivion of *Shakspeare*.

CHAPTER III.

THE theatres were thrown open at the Restoration. Malone, in his "Historical Account of the English Stage," informs us, that "in the latter end of the year 1659, some months before the restoration of King Charles II., the theatres, which had been suppressed during the usurpation, began to revive, and several plays were performed at the Red Bull in St. John's Street, in that and the following years, before the return of the King." He then adds, that in June, 1660, three companies seem to have been formed, including that of the Red Bull; and he enters into a history of the contests between the Master of the Revels, and Killigrew and Davenant, who had received a patent from the king for the exclusive performance of dramatic entertainments. It is scarcely necessary for us to pursue the details of this contest, which, as is well known,

terminated in the permanent establishment of two theatres only in London. Malone has ransacked the very irregular series of papers connected with the office of Sir Henry Herbert, who appears to have kept an eye upon theatrical performances with a view to demanding his fees if he should be supported by the higher powers. From these, and other sources, such as the List of Downes, the prompter of the principal plays acted by Killigrew's company, Malone infers, that "such was the lamentable taste of those times that the plays of Fletcher, Jonson, and Shirley were much oftener exhibited than those of Shakspeare." The plays acted by this company, as he collects from these documents, were Henry IV., Merry Wives of Windsor, Othello, and Julius Cæsar. At Davenant's theatre, which boasted of the great actor Betterton, we learn from Malone, that the plays performed were Pericles, Macbeth, The Tempest, Lear, Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, Henry VIII., Twelfth Night, Taming of the Shrew, Henry V. Malone does not do justice to the value of his own documents, for, when he gives us one list, he points out that there are only three plays of Shakspeare—"a melancholy proof" of his decline; and at another list he shakes his head, reciting "the following plays of Shakspeare, and these *only*." Now it appears to us that, if any proof were wanting of the wonderful hold which Shakspeare had taken of the English mind, under circumstances the most adverse to his con-

tinued popularity, it would be found in these imperfect lists, which do not extend over more than eight or nine years. Here are absolutely fourteen plays of Shakspeare revived—for that is the phrase—in an age which was prolific of its own authors, adapting themselves to a new school of courtly taste. All the indirect testimony, however meagre, exhibits the enduring popularity of Shakspeare. Killigrew's new theatre in Drury Lane is opened with Henry IV. Within a few months after the Restoration, when heading and hanging are going forward, Pepys relates that he went to see Othello. In 1661, he is attracted by Romeo and Juliet; and, in 1662, we have an entry in his diary, with his famous criticism: "To the King's Theatre, where we saw *Midsummer's Night's Dream*, which I had never seen before, nor shall ever again, for it is the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life." Here, upon unquestionable authority, we have a fifteenth play added to the fourteen previously cited. But why need we search amongst such chance entries for evidence of the reputation of Shakspeare immediately after the Restoration? Those who talk of Shakspeare as *emerging* some century ago into celebrity after having fallen into neglect for a lengthened period; those who flip-pantly affirm, that "the preface of Pope was the first thing that procured general admiration for his works," are singularly ignorant of the commonest passages of literary history. To the

vague and random assertions and assumptions, whether old or new, about the neglect into which Shakspeare had fallen as a popular dramatist, may be opposed the most distinct testimony of one, especially, who was a most accurate and minute chronicler of the public taste. Colley Cibber, who himself became an actor, in 1690, in the one privileged company of London of which Betterton was the head—a company formed out of the united strength of the two companies which had been established at the Restoration—describes the state of the stage at the period of the first revival of dramatic performances: “Besides their being thorough masters of their art, these actors set forward with two critical advantages, which perhaps may never happen again in many ages.” One of the advantages he mentions, but a secondary one, was, “that before the Restoration no actresses had ever been seen upon the English stage.” But the chief advantage was, “their immediate opening after the so long interdiction of plays during the civil war and the anarchy that followed it.” He then goes on to say, “What eager appetites from so long a fast must the guests of those times have had to that high and fresh variety of entertainments!” Provided by whom? By the combined *variety* of Jonson, and Fletcher, and Massinger, and Ford, and Shirley. and a host of other writers, whose attractive fare was to be presented to the eager guests after so long a fast? No. The high entertain-

ment and the fresh variety was to be provided by one man alone,—the man who we are told was neglected in his own age, and forgotten in that which came after him. “What eager appetites from so long a fast must the guests of those times have had to that high and fresh variety of entertainments *which Shakespeare had left prepared for them! Never was a stage so provided.* A hundred years are wasted, and another silent century well advanced*, and yet what unborn age shall say Shakespeare has his equal! How many shining actors have the warm scenes of his genius given to posterity!” Betterton is idolized as an actor, as much as the old man venerates Shakspeare: “Betterton was an actor, as Shakespeare was an author, both without competitors; formed for the mutual assistance and illustration of each other’s genius. How Shakespeare wrote, all men who have a taste for nature may read, and know; but with what higher rapture would he still be read, could they conceive how Betterton played him!” Whenever Cibber speaks of Betterton’s wondrous excellence, it is always in connection with Shakspeare: “Should I tell you that all the Othellos, Hamlets, Hotspurs, Macbeths, and Brutuses whom you may have seen since his time, have fallen far short of him, this still should give you no idea of his particular excellence.” For some years after the Restoration it seems to have been

* Cibber is writing as late as 1740.

difficult to satiate the people with the repetition of Shakspeare's great characters and leading plays, in company with some of the plays of Jonson and Fletcher. The two companies had an agreement as to their performances : " All the capital plays of Shakspeare, Fletcher. and Ben Jonson were divided between them by the approbation of the court, and their own alternate choice. So that when Hart was famous for Othello, Betterton had no less a reputation for Hamlet." Still, the test of histrionic excellence was Shakspeare. So far from Shakspeare being neglected at this period, it is almost evident that the performance of him was overdone ; for every one knows that a theatrical audience, even in the largest city, is, in a considerable degree, composed of regular frequenters of the theatre, and that novelty is therefore an indispensable requisite to continued success. The plays of Shakspeare were better acted by the company of which Betterton was the head, than by the rival company ; and this, according to Cibber, led to the introduction of a new taste:—" These two excellent companies were both prosperous for some few years, till their variety of plays began to be exhausted. Then, of course, the better actors (which the King's seem to have been allowed) could not fail of drawing the greater audiences. Sir William Davenant, therefore, master of the Duke's company, to make head against their success, was forced to add spectacle and music to action ; and

to introduce a new species of plays, since called dramatic operas, of which kind were "The Tempest," "Psyche," "Circe," and others, all set off with the most expensive decorations of scenes and habits, with the best voices and dancers.

"This sensual supply of sight and sound coming into the assistance of the weaker party, it was no wonder they should grow too hard for sense and simple nature, when it is considered how many more people there are that can see and hear than think and judge. So wanton a change of the public taste, therefore, began to fall as heavy upon the King's company as their greater excellence in action had before fallen upon their competitors. Of which encroachment upon wit several good prologues in those days frequently complained."

There can be no doubt that most of the original performances of Shakspeare, immediately after the Restoration, were given from his unsophisticated text. The first improvements that were perpetrated upon this text resulted from the cause which Cibber has so accurately described. Davenant, to make head against the success of the King's company, "was forced to add spectacle and music to action." What importance Davenant attached to these novelties, we may learn from the description of the opening scene of "The Enchanted Island;" that alteration of "The Tempest," by himself and Dryden, to which Cibber refers:—"The front of the stage

is opened, and the band of twenty-four violins, with the harpsicals and theorbos which accompany the voices, are placed between the pit and the stage. While the overture is playing, the curtain rises, and discovers a new frontispiece joined to the great pilasters on each side of the stage. This frontispiece is a noble arch, supported by large wreathed columns of the Corinthian order ; the wreathings of the columns are beautified with roses wound round them, and several Cupids flying about them. On the cornice, just over the capitals, sits on either side a figure, with a trumpet in one hand and a palm in the other, representing Fame. A little farther on the same cornice, on each side of a compass-pediment, lie a lion and a unicorn, the supporters of the royal arms of England. In the middle of the arch are several angels holding the king's arms, as if they were placing them in the midst of that compass-pediment. Behind this is the scene, which represents a thick cloudy sky, a very rocky coast, and a tempestuous sea in perpetual agitation. This tempest (supposed to be raised by magic) has many dreadful objects in it, as several spirits in horrid shapes flying down amongst the sailors, then rising in the air. And when the ship is sinking, the whole house is darkened, and a shower of fire falls upon 'em. This is accompanied with lightning, and several claps of thunder, to the end of the storm."

In the alterations of this play, which were

made in 1669, and which continued to possess the English stage for nearly a century and a half, it is impossible now not to feel how false was the taste upon which they were built. Dryden says of this play, that Davenant, to put the last hand to it, "designed the counterpart to Shakespeare's plot, namely, that of a man who had never seen a woman; that by this means those two characters of innocence and love might the more illustrate and commend each other." Nothing can be weaker and falser in art than this mere duplication of an idea. But still it was not done irreverently. The prologue to this altered *Tempest* (of his own part of which Dryden says, "I never writ anything with more delight") is of itself an answer to the asinine assertion that Dryden, in common with the public of his day, was indifferent to the memory of Shakspeare*:—

"As when a tree's cut down, the secret root
Lives underground, and thence new branches shoot.
So, from old Shakespear's honour'd dust, this day
Springs up and buds a new reviving play.
Shakespear, who (taught by none) did first impart
To Fletcher wit, to labouring Jonson art.
He, monarch like, gave those his subjects law,
And is that nature which they paint and draw.

* Lardner's *Cyclopædia*, &c. We are almost ashamed to quote this trumpery performance; but, absurd as it is, its false assertions are still echoed; and its echoes are heard even amongst those who associate themselves together in honour of Shakspeare.

Fletcher reach'd that which on his heights did grow,
 Whilst Jonson crept and gather'd all below.
 This did his love, and this his mirth digest:
 One imitates him most, the other best.
 If they have since out-writ all other men,
 'Tis with the drops which fell from Shakespear's pen.
 The storm which vanish'd on the neighb'ring shore
 Was taught by Shakespear's Tempest first to roar.
 That innocence and beauty which did smile
 In Fletcher, grew on this Enchanted Isle.
 But Shakespear's magic could not copied be,
 Within that circle none durst walk but he.
 I must confess 'twas bold, nor would you now
 That liberty to vulgar wits allow,
 Which works by magic supernatural things:
 But Shakespear's pow'r is sacred as a king's.
 Those legends from old priesthood were receiv'd,
 And he then writ, as people then believ'd."

Of Dryden's personal admiration of Shakspeare, of his profound veneration for Shakspeare, there is abundant proof. He belonged to the transition period of English poetry. His better judgment was sometimes held in subjection to the false taste that prevailed around him. He attempted to found a school of criticism, which should establish rules of art differing from those which produced the drama of Shakspeare, and yet not acknowledging the supremacy of the tame and formal school of the French tragedians. He did not perfectly understand the real nature of the romantic drama. He did not see that, as in all other high poetry, simplicity was one of its great elements. He was of those who would "gild

refined gold." But for genial hearty admiration of the great master of the romantic drama no one ever went beyond him. Take, for example, the conclusion of his preface to "All for Love:"—"In my style I have professed to imitate the divine Shakespear; which that I might perform more freely, I have disencumbered myself from rhyme. Not that I condemn my former way, but that this is more proper to my present purpose. I hope I need not to explain myself that I have not copied my author servilely. Words and phrases must of necessity receive a change in succeeding ages. But 'tis almost a miracle that much of his language remains so pure; and that he who began dramatic poetry amongst us, untaught by any, and, as Ben Jonson tells us, without learning, should, by the force of his own genius, perform so much, that in a manner he has left no praise for any who came after him."

Dryden had the notion, in which Shaftesbury followed him, that the style of Shakspeare was obsolete, although we have just seen that he says. "'Tis almost a miracle that much of his language remains so pure." Yet with this notion, which he puts forward as an apology for tampering with Shakspeare, he never ceases to express his admiration of him; and, what is of more importance, to show how general was the same feeling. The preface to *Troilus and Cressida* thus begins:—"The poet *Æschylus* was held in the same veneration by the Athenians of after ages, as Shak-

speare is by us." In this preface is introduced the "Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy," in which the critic applies a variety of tests to the art of Shakspeare, which only show that he did not understand the principles upon which Shakspeare worked: but still there is everywhere the most unqualified admiration; and in the prologue to the altered play, which, being addressed to the people, could scarcely deal with such rules and exceptions for the formation of a judgment, we have again the most positive testimony to the public sense of Shakspeare. This prologue is "spoken by Mr. Betterton, representing the ghost of Shakspeare."

" See, my lov'd Britons, see your Shakespear rise,
An awful ghost confess'd to human eyes!
Unnam'd, methinks, distinguish'd I had been
From other shades, by this eternal green,
Above whose wreaths the vulgar poets strive,
And with a touch their wither'd bays revive.
Untaught, unpractis'd, in a barbarous age,
I found not, but created first, the stage.
And, if I drain'd no Greek or Latin store,
'Twas, that my own abundance gave me more.
On foreign trade I needed not rely,
Like fruitful Britain, rich without supply.
In this my rough-drawn play you shall behold
Some master-strokes, so manly and so bold,
That he, who meant to alter, found 'em such,
He shook; and thought it sacrilege to touch.
Now, where are the successors to my name?
What bring they to fill out a poet's fame?
Weak, short-liv'd issues of a feeble age;
Scarce living to be christen'd on the stage!"

With these repeated acknowledgments of Shakspeare's supremacy it is at first difficult to understand how, in 1665, Dryden should have written "others are now generally preferred before him." The age, as he himself tells us, differed in this respect from that of Shakspeare's own age, and also from that of Charles I. He says, in the same "Essay on Dramatic Poesy," speaking of Beaumont and Fletcher, "Their plays are now the most pleasant and frequent entertainments of the stage, two of theirs being acted through the year for one of Shakespear's or Jonson's." But this is not neglect or oblivion of Shakspeare. We learn pretty clearly from Dryden, though he does not care to say so, for that would have been self-condemnation, that a licentiousness which was not found in Shakspeare was an agreeable thing to a licentious audience: "They" (Beaumont and Fletcher) "understood and imitated the conversation of gentlemen much better, whose wild debaucheries, and quickness of wit in repartees, no poet before them could paint as they have done. . . . They represented all the passions very lively, but, above all, love." The highest things in Shakspeare can only be fitly appreciated by a people amongst whom there is a high moral tone, capable of understanding and of originating the highest poetical things. With all their faults, the ages of Elizabeth and James possessed this tone; and it is impossible now to estimate how greatly Shakspeare contributed to its preservation.

But nine years after the Restoration there was no public principle in England, and little private honour. The keenest relish for Shakspeare most probably existed out of the Court ; and Betterton, in all likelihood, felt the applause of the pit more truly valuable than that of the king's box. One thing is perfectly clear : that when Dryden is addressing the *people*, he speaks of Shakspeare as *their* especial favourite. He is then "*your* Shakspeare." The crafty and prosaic Pepys, on the contrary, no doubt expressed many a courtier's sentiment about Shakspeare. In the entry of his Diary of August 20th, 1666, we have, "To Deptford by water, reading '*Othello*, Moor of Venice,' which I ever heretofore esteemed a mighty good play ; but having so lately read '*The Adventures of Five Hours*,' it seems a mean thing." • "*The Adventures of Five Hours*," a tragi-comedy, by Sir Samuel Tuke, was a translation from the Spanish, which Echard commends for its variety of plots and intrigues. We can easily understand how Pepys, and "my wife's maid," counted *Othello* a mean thing in comparison with it. Pepys shows us pretty clearly the sort of audience that in that day was called fashionable, and the mode in which they displayed their interest in a theatrical entertainment : — "My wife and I to the King's playhouse, and there saw '*The Island Princess*,' the first time I ever saw it ; and it is a pretty good play, many good things being in it, and a good scene of a

town on fire. We sat in an upper box, and the jade Nell came and sat in the next box ; a bold, merry slut, who lay laughing there upon people." Again : " To the King's house to ' The Maid's Tragedy ; ' but vexed all the while with two talking ladies and Sir Charles Sedley ; yet pleased to hear their discourse, he being a stranger." We can easily imagine that the " jade Nell," and the " talking ladies," were the representatives of a very large class, who preferred " other plays " to those of Shakspeare.

" The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy," to which we have alluded, contains a more condensed view of Dryden's opinions of Shakspeare than any other of his prefaces. We present it, therefore, with some unimportant omissions, as the summary of the judgment of the highest critical authority of this period,—when the public taste had been corrupted with music and spectacle, and comedies of licentious intrigue abounded, in company with the rhyming tragedies of Dryden himself, and the ranting bombast of his inferior rivals. This essay first appeared in 1679 :—

" Tragedy is thus defined by Aristotle (omitting what I thought unnecessary in his definition) : it is an imitation of one entire, great, and probable action ; not told, but represented ; which, by moving in us fear and pity, is conducive to the purging of those two passions in our minds. More largely thus : Tragedy describes or paints an action, which action must have all the pro-

prieties above named. First, it must be one, or single ; that is, it must not be a history of one man's life — suppose of Alexander the Great, or Julius Cæsar — but one single action of theirs. This condemns all Shakespear's historical plays, which are rather chronicles represented than tragedies ; and all double action of plays. . . .

The natural reason of this rule is plain ; for two different independent actions distract the attention and concernment of the audience, and, consequently, destroy the intention of the poet. If his business be to move terror and pity, and one of his actions be comical, the other tragical, the former will divert the people, and utterly make void his greater purpose. Therefore, as in perspective, so in tragedy, there must be a point of sight in which all the lines terminate ; otherwise, the eye wanders, and the work is false. . . .

“ As the action ought to be one, it ought, as such, to have order in it ; that is, to have a natural beginning, a middle, and an end. A natural beginning, says Aristotle, is that which could not necessarily have been placed after another thing ; and so of the rest. This consideration will arraign all plays after the new model of Spanish plots, where accident is heaped upon accident, and that which is first, might as reasonably be last ; an inconvenience not to be remedied but by making one accident naturally produce another, otherwise it is a farce, and not a play. . . .

“ The following properties of the action are so

easy that they need not my explaining. It ought to be great, and to consist of great persons, to distinguish it from comedy, where the action is trivial, and the persons of inferior rank. The last quality of the action is, that it ought to be probable, as well as admirable and great. It is not necessary that there should be historical truth in it ; but always necessary that there should be a likeness of truth, something that is more than barely possible, probable being that which succeeds or happens oftener than it misses. To invent, therefore, a probability, and to make it wonderful, is the most difficult undertaking in the art of poetry : for that which is not wonderful is not great, and that which is not probable will not delight a reasonable audience. This action, thus described, must be represented, and not told, to distinguish dramatic poetry from epic. But I hasten to the end, or scope, of tragedy, which is to rectify or purge our passions, fear and pity.

“ To instruct delightfully is the general end of all poetry ; philosophy instructs, but it performs its work by precept, which is not delightful, or not so delightful as example. To purge the passions by example is therefore the particular instruction which belongs to tragedy. Rapin, a judicious critic, has observed, from Aristotle, that pride and want of commiseration are the most predominant vices in mankind : therefore, to cure us of these two, the inventors

of tragedy have chosen to work upon two other passions, which are fear and pity. We are wrought to fear by their setting before our eyes some terrible example of misfortune which happened to persons of the highest quality ; for such an action demonstrates to us that no condition is privileged from the turns of fortune : this must of necessity cause terror in us, and consequently abate our pride. But when we see that the most virtuous, as well as the greatest, are not exempt from such misfortunes, that consideration moves pity in us, and insensibly works us to be helpful to, and tender over, the distressed, which is the noblest and most godlike of moral virtues. Here it is observable that it is absolutely necessary to make a man virtuous, if we desire he should be pitied. We lament not, but detest, a wicked man : we are glad when we behold his crimes are punished, and that poetical justice is done upon him. Euripides was censured by the critics of his time for making his chief characters too wicked : for example, Phædra, though she loved her son-in-law with reluctancy, and that it was a curse upon her family for offending Venus, yet was thought too ill a pattern for the stage. Shall we therefore banish all characters of villany ? I confess I am not of that opinion : but it is necessary that the hero of the play be not a villain ; that is, the characters which should move our pity ought to have virtuous inclinations and degrees of moral goodness in them. As for a

perfect character of virtue, it never was in nature, and therefore, there can be no imitation of it: but there are allays of frailty to be allowed for the chief persons, yet so that the good which is in them shall outweigh the bad, and consequently leave room for punishment on the one side, and pity on the other.

“ After all, if any one will ask me whether a tragedy cannot be made upon any other grounds than those of exciting pity and terror in us, Bossu, the best of modern critics, answers thus, in general: ‘ That all excellent arts, and particularly that of poetry, have been invented and brought to perfection by men of a transcendent genius; and that therefore they who practise afterwards the same arts are obliged to tread in their footsteps, and to search in their writings the foundation of them; for it is not just that new rules should destroy the authority of the old. ’

“ Here therefore the general answer may be given to the first question, how far we ought to imitate Shakespear and Fletcher in their plots; namely, that we ought to follow them so far only as they have copied the excellences of those who invented and brought to perfection dramatic poetry; those things only excepted which religion, customs of countries, idioms of languages, &c., have altered in the superstructures, but not in the foundation of the design.

“ How defective Shakespear and Fletcher have

been in all their plots, Mr. Rymer has discovered in his ' Criticisms : ' neither can we, who follow them, be excused from the same or greater errors ; which are the more unpardonable in us, because we want their beauty to countervail our faults.

" The difference between Shakespear and Fletcher in their plotting, seems to be this—that Shakespear generally moves more terror, and Fletcher more compassion. For the first had a more masculine, a bolder, and more fiery genius ; the second, a more soft and womanish. In the mechanic beauties of the plot, which are the observation of the three unities—time, place, and action—they are both deficient ; but Shakespear most. Ben Jonson reformed those errors in his comedies, yet one of Shakespear's was regular before him ; which is, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

" After the plot, which is the foundation of the play, the next thing to which we ought to apply our judgment is the manners ; for now the poet comes to work aboveground. The groundwork indeed is that which is most necessary, as that upon which depends the firmness of the whole fabric ; yet it strikes not the eye so much as the beauties or imperfections of the manners, the thoughts, and the expressions.

" The first rule which Bossu prescribes to the writer of an heroic poem, and which holds, too, by the same reason in all dramatic poetry, is to

make the moral of the work ; that is, to lay down to yourself what the precept of morality shall be which you would insinuate into the people : as, namely, Homer's (which I have copied in my 'Conquest of Granada') was, that union preserves a commonwealth, and discord destroys it ; Sophocles, in his 'Œdipus,' that no man is to be accounted happy before his death. It is the moral that directs the whole action of the play to one centre, and that action or fable is the example built upon the moral, which confirms the truth of it to our experience. When the fable is designed, then, and not before, the persons are to be introduced, with their manners, characters, and passions.

"The manners in a poem are understood to be those inclinations, whether natural or acquired, which move and carry us to actions, good, bad, or indifferent, in a play ; or which incline the persons to such or such actions. . . .

"But as the manners are useful in this art, they may be all comprised under these general heads : First, they must be apparent ; that is, in every character of the play some inclinations of the person must appear ; and these are shown in the actions and discourse. Secondly, the manners must be suitable or agreeing to the persons ; that is, to the age, sex, dignity, and the other general heads of manners. Thus, when a poet has given the dignity of a king to one of his persons, in all his actions and speeches, that

person must discover majesty, magnanimity, and jealousy of power ; because these are suitable to the general manners of a king. The third property of manners is resemblance ; and this is founded upon the particular characters of men, as we have them delivered to us by relation or history ; that is, when a poet has the known character of this or that man before him, he is bound to represent him such, at least not contrary to that which fame has reported him to have been.

“ The last property of manners is, that they be constant and equal ; that is, maintained the same through the whole design.

“ From the manners the characters of persons are derived ; for indeed the characters are no other than the inclinations, as they appear in the several persons of the poem : a character being thus defined — that which distinguishes one man from another. Not to repeat the same things over again which have been said of the manners, I will only add what is necessary here. A character, or that which distinguishes one man from all others, cannot be supposed to consist of one particular virtue, or vice, or passion only ; but it is a composition of qualities which are not contrary to one another in the same person. Thus, the same man may be liberal and valiant, but not liberal and covetous ; so in a comical character, or humour, (which is an inclination to this or that particular folly,) Falstaff is a

liar and a coward, a glutton and a buffoon, because all these qualities may agree in the same man ; yet it is still to be observed that one virtue, vice, and passion, ought to be shown in every man, as predominant over all the rest ; as covetousness in Crassus, love of his country in Brutus ; and the same in characters which are feigned.

“ The chief character or hero in a tragedy, as I have already shown, ought in prudence to be such a man, who has so much more in him of virtue than of vice, that he may be left amiable to the audience, which otherwise cannot have any concernment for his sufferings ; and it is on this one character that the pity and terror must be principally, if not wholly, founded ; a rule which is extremely necessary, and which none of the critics that I know have fully enough discovered to us ; for terror and compassion work but weakly when they are divided into many persons. . . .

“ By what has been said of the manners, it will be easy for a reasonable man to judge whether the characters be truly or falsely drawn in a tragedy ; for if there be no manners appearing in the characters, no concernment for the persons can be raised ; no pity or horror can be moved but by vice or virtue, therefore without them no person can have business in the play. If the inclinations be obscure, it is a sign the poet is in the dark, and knows not what manner of man

he presents to you, and consequently you can have no idea, or very imperfect, of that man ; nor can judge what resolutions he ought to take, or what words or actions are proper for him. Most comedies made up of accidents or adventures are liable to fall into this error ; and tragedies with many turns are subject to it ; for the manners never can be evident where the surprises of fortune take up all the business of the stage, and where the poet is more in pain to tell you what happened to such a man than what he was. It is one of the excellences of Shakespear, that the manners of his persons are generally apparent, and you see their bent and inclinations. Fletcher comes far short of him in this, as indeed he does almost in everything. There are but glimmerings of manners in most of his comedies, which run upon adventures ; and in his tragedies, 'Rollo,' 'Otto,' the 'King and no King,' 'Melantius,' and many others of his best, are but pictures shown you in the twilight ; you know not whether they resemble vice or virtue, and they are either good, bad, or indifferent, as the present scene requires it. But of all poets this commendation is to be given to Ben Jonson, that the manners even of the most inconsiderable persons in his plays are everywhere apparent.

"By considering the second quality of manners, which is, that they be suitable to the age, quality, country, dignity, &c., of the character, we may likewise judge whether a poet has fol-

lowed nature. In this kind Sophocles and Euripides have more excelled among the Greeks than Æschylus ; and Terence more than Plautus among the Romans. . . . The present French poets are generally accused, that, wheresoever they lay the scene, or in whatsoever age, the manners of their heroes are wholly French. Racine's Bajazet is bred at Constantinople, but his civilities are conveyed to him by some secret passage from Versailles into the Seraglio. But our Shakespear, having ascribed to Henry the Fourth the character of a king and of a father, gives him the perfect manners of each relation, when either he transacts with his son or with his subjects. Fletcher, on the other side, gives neither to Arbaces, nor to his king in 'The Maid's Tragedy,' the qualities which are suitable to a monarch. . . . To return once more to Shakespear : no man ever drew so many characters, or generally distinguished them better from one another, excepting only Jonson. I will instance but in one, to show the copiousness of his invention ; it is that of Caliban, or the monster, in 'The Tempest.' He seems there to have created a person which was not in nature—a boldness which at first sight would appear intolerable ; for he makes him a species of himself, begotten by an incubus on a witch ; but this, as I have elsewhere proved, is not wholly beyond the bounds of credibility,—at least the vulgar still believe it. We have the separated notions of a spirit and of a witch—(and spirits,

according to Plato, are vested with a subtle body ; according to some of his followers, have different sexes) ; — therefore, as from the distinct apprehensions of a horse and of a man, imagination has formed a Centaur, so from those of an incubus and a sorceress Shakespear has produced his monster. Whether or no his generation can be defended I leave to philosophy ; but of this I am certain, that the poet has most judiciously furnished him with a person, a language, and a character which will suit him, both by father's and mother's side : he has all the discontents and malice of a witch and of a devil, besides a convenient proportion of the deadly sins — gluttony, sloth, and lust are manifest ; the dejectedness of a slave is likewise given him, and the ignorance of one bred up in a desert island. His person is monstrous, as he is the product of unnatural lust ; and his language is as hobgoblin as his person : in all things he is distinguished from other mortals. The characters of Fletcher are poor and narrow in comparison of Shakespear's : I remember not one which is not borrowed from him, unless you will except that strange mixture of a man in the ' King and no King.' So that in this part Shakespear is generally worth our imitation ; and to imitate Fletcher is but to copy after him who was a copier.

“ Under this general head of manners, the passions are naturally included as belonging to the characters. I speak not of pity and of terror,

which are to be moved in the audience by the plot, but of anger, hatred, love, ambition, jealousy, revenge; &c., as they are shown in this or that person of the play. To describe these naturally, and to move them artfully, is one of the greatest commendations which can be given to a poet. To write pathetically, says Longinus, cannot proceed but from a lofty genius. A poet must be born with this quality; yet, unless he help himself by an acquired knowledge of the passions, what they are in their own nature, and by what springs they are to be moved, he will be subject either to raise them where they ought not to be raised, or not to raise them by the just degrees of nature, or to amplify them beyond the natural bounds, or not to observe the crisis and turns of them in their cooling and decay: all which errors proceed from want of judgment in the poet, and from being unskilled in the principles of moral philosophy.

“It is necessary therefore for a poet, who would concern an audience by describing of a passion, first to prepare it, and not to rush upon it all at once.

“The next necessary rule is, to put nothing into the discourse which may hinder your moving of the passions. Too many accidents, as I have said, encumber the poet as much as the arms of Saul did David; for the variety of passions which they produce are ever crossing and justling each other out of the way. He who treats of joy

and grief together is in a fair way of causing neither of those effects. There is yet another obstacle to be removed, which is pointed wit, and sentences affected out of season; these are nothing of kin to the violence of passion. No man is at leisure to make sentences and similes when his soul is in agony.

“If Shakespear be allowed, as I think he must, to have made his characters distinct, it will easily be inferred that he understood the nature of the passions; because it has been proved already that confused passions make undistinguishable characters. Yet I cannot deny that he has his failings; but they are not so much in the passions themselves as in his manner of expression: he often obscures his meaning by his words, and sometimes makes it unintelligible. I will not say of so great a poet, that he distinguished not the blown puffy style from true sublimity, but I may venture to maintain that the fury of his fancy often transported him beyond the bounds of judgment, either in coining of new words and phrases, or racking words which were in use into the violence of a catachresis. It is not that I would explode the use of metaphors from passion, for Longinus thinks them necessary to raise it; but to use them at every word,—to say nothing without a metaphor, a simile, an image, or description,—is, I doubt, to smell a little too strongly of the buskin. I must be forced to

give an example of expressing passion figuratively ; but that I may do it with respect to Shakespear, it shall not be taken from anything of his ; it is an exclamation against fortune, quoted in his Hamlet, but written by some other poet : —

‘ Out, out, thou strumpet Fortune ! all you gods,
In general synod, take away her power,
Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,
And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven
As low as to the fiends.’

And immediately after, speaking of Hecuba, when Priam was killed before her eyes : —

‘ The mobbled queen,’ &c.

“ What a pudder is here kept in raising the expression of trifling thoughts ! Would not a man have thought that the poet had been bound prentice to a wheelwright for his first rant ? and had followed a ragman for the clout and blanket in the second ? . . . But Shakespear does not often thus ; for the passions in his scene between Brutus and Cassius are extremely natural, the thoughts are such as arise from the matter, and the expression of them not viciously figurative. I cannot leave this subject before I do justice to that divine poet, by giving you one of his passionate descriptions : it is of Richard the Second, when he was deposed and led in triumph through the streets of London by Henry Bul-lingbrook. The painting of it is so lively and

the words so moving, that I have scarce read anything comparable to it in any other language, Suppose you have seen already the fortunate usurper passing through the crowd, and followed by the shouts and acclamations of the people; and now behold King Richard entering upon the scene. Consider the wretchedness of his condition, and his carriage in it, and refrain from pity if you can:—

‘As in a theatre, the eyes of men,’ &c.

“To speak justly of this whole matter, it is neither height of thought that is discommended, nor pathetic vehemence, nor any nobleness of expression in its proper place; but it is a false measure of all these, something which is like them and is not them: it is the Bristol stone which appears like a diamond; it is an extravagant thought instead of a sublime one; it is roaring madness instead of vehemence; and a sound of words instead of sense. If Shakespear were stripped of all the bombast in his passions, and drest in the most vulgar words, we should find the beauties of his thoughts remaining; if his embroideries were burnt down, there would still be silver at the bottom of the melting-pot. But I fear (at least let me fear it for myself) that we who ape his sounding words have nothing of his thought, but are all outside; there is not so much as a dwarf within our giant’s clothes. Therefore let not Shakespear

suffer for our sakes ; it is our fault who succeed him in an age which is more refined, if we imitate him so ill that we copy his failings only, and make a virtue of that in our writings which in his was an imperfection.

“ For what remains, the excellency of that poet was, as I have said, in the more manly passions ; Fletcher’s in the softer : Shakespear writ better betwixt man and man, Fletcher betwixt man and women ; consequently the one described friendship better, the other love ; yet Shakespear taught Fletcher to write love ; and Juliet and Desdemona are originals. It is true the scholar had the softer soul, but the master had the kinder. Friendship is both a virtue and a passion essentially : love is a passion only in its nature, and is not a virtue but by accident. Good nature makes friendship, but effeminacy love. Shakespear had an universal mind, which comprehended all characters and passions ; Fletcher a more confined and limited : for though he treated love in perfection, yet honour, ambition, revenge, and generally all the stronger passions, he either touched not or not masterly. To conclude all, he was a limb of Shakespear.”

“ The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy ” is held by Dr. Johnson to be an answer to “ The Tragedies of the last Age considered and examined,” by the celebrated Thomas Rymer. Rymer’s book was originally published in 1678 ; and Dryden’s Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*, in which the supposed answer is contained, appeared in the following year. Rymer is ge-

nerally known as the learned editor of the vast collection of national documents, arranged and published by him in his official capacity of Historiographer Royal, under the name of "Fœdera." But this publication was not commenced till 1703, and for many years previous he had been a miscellaneous writer in polite literature. In 1678, he produced a tragedy entitled "Edgar." It is almost painful to consider that an author to whose gigantic labours all students of English history are so deeply indebted should have put forth the most ludicrous criticisms upon Shakspeare that exist in the English language. In "The Tragedies considered," he proposes to examine "the choicest and most applauded English tragedies of this last age ; as 'Rollo,' 'A King and no King,' 'The Maid's Tragedy,' by Beaumont and Fletcher ; 'Othello,' and 'Julius Cæsar,' by Shakespear ; and 'Catiline,' by worthy Ben." But at this period he did not carry through his design. The whole of this book is devoted to the three plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. It would be beside our purpose to show how he disposes of them ; but the following passage will exhibit the nature of his judgment : — "I have thought our poetry of the last age as rude as our architecture. One cause thereof might be, that Aristotle's 'Treatise of Poetry' has been so little studied amongst us." The completion of Rymer's plan was deferred for fifteen years. In 1693, appeared "A Short View

of Tragedy ; its original Excellency and Corruption. With some Reflections on Shakespear, and other Practitioners for the Stage." This second treatise thus begins : " What reformation may not we expect now that in France they see the necessity for a chorus to their tragedies ! The chorus was the root and original, and is certainly almost the most necessary part, of tragedy." It would be exceedingly unjust to Rymer to collect the *disjecta membra* of his criticism upon, or rather abuse of, Shakspeare, without exhibiting what were his own notions of dramatic excellence ; and certainly in the whole range of the ludicrous there are few things more amusing than his solemn scheme for a tragedy on the subject of the Spanish Armada, in imitation of " The Persians," of Æschylus. We cannot resist the temptation of presenting it to our readers : —

" The place, then, for the action may be at Madrid, by some tomb, or solemn place of resort ; or, if we prefer a turn in it from good to bad fortune, then some drawing room in the palace near the king's bed chamber.

" The time to begin, twelve at night.

" The scene opening presents fifteen grandees of Spain, with their most solemn beards and accoutrements, met there (suppose) after some ball, or other public occasion. They talk of the state of affairs, the greatness of their power, the vastness of their dominions, and prospect to be

infallibly, ere long, lords of all. With this prosperity and goodly thoughts transported, they at last form themselves into the chorus, and walk such measures, with music, as may become the gravity of such a chorus.

“Then enter two or three of the cabinet council, who now have leave to tell the secret that the preparations and the invincible Armada was to conquer England. These, with part of the chorus, may communicate all the particulars — the provisions, and the strength by sea and land; the certainty of success, the advantages by that accession; and the many tun of tar-barrels for the heretics. These topics may afford matter enough, with the chorus, for the second act.

“In the third act, these gentlemen of the cabinet cannot agree about sharing the preferments of England, and a mighty broil there is amongst them. One will not be content unless he is King of Man; another will be Duke of Lancaster. One, that had seen a coronation in England, will by all means be Duke of Aquitaine, or else Duke of Normandy. And on this occasion two competitors have a juster occasion to work up and show the muscles of their passion than Shakespear’s Cassius and Brutus. After, the chorus.

“The fourth act may, instead of Atossa, present some old dames of the court, used to dream dreams, and to see sprites, in their night-rails

and forehead-cloths, to alarm our gentlemen with new apprehensions, which make distraction and disorders sufficient to furnish out this act.

“ In the last act the king enters, and wisely discourses against dreams and hobgoblins, to quiet their minds : and, the more to satisfy them, and take off their fright, he lets them to know that St. Loyola had appeared to him, and assured him that all is well. This said, comes a messenger of the ill news ; his account is lame, suspected, he sent to prison. A second messenger, that came away long after, but had a speedier passage : his account is distinct, and all their loss credited. So, in fine, one of the chorus concludes with that of Euripides, Thus you see the gods bring things to pass often otherwise than was by man proposed.”

After this, can we wonder that the art of Thomas Rymer is opposed to the art of William Shakspeare ? Let us hear what he says of Othello — “ of all the tragedies acted on our English stage, that which is said to bear the bell away.” He first gives the fable, of which the points are, the marriage of Othello, the jealousy from the incident of the handkerchief, and the murder of Desdemona. The facetious critic then proceeds : —

“ Whatever rubs or difficulty may stick on the bark, the moral, sure, of this fable is very instructive.

“ First, This may be a caution to all maidens

of quality how, without their parents' consent, they run away with blackamoors.

"Secondly, This may be a warning to all good wives, that they look well to their linen.

"Thirdly, This may be a lesson to husbands, that, before their jealousy be tragical, the proofs may be mathematical."

The whole story of Othello, we learn, is founded upon "an improbable lie :"—

"The character of that state (Venice) is to employ strangers in their wars ; but shall a poet thence fancy that they will set a negro to be their general, or trust a Moor to defend them against the Turk ? With us, a blackamoor might rise to be a trumpeter ; but Shakespear would not have him less than a lieutenant-general. With us, a Moor might marry some little drab, or small-coal wench : Shakespear would provide him the daughter and heir of some great lord or privy-councillor ; and all the town should reckon it a very suitable match : yet the English are not bred up with that hatred and aversion to the Moors as are the Venetians, who suffer by a perpetual hostility from them, —

Littora littoribus contraria . . .

Nothing is more odious in nature than an improbable lie ; and, certainly, never was any play fraught, like this of Othello, with improbabilities."

We next are told, that "the characters of

manners, which are the second part in a tragedy, are not less unnatural and improper than the fable was improbable and absurd." From such characters we are not to expect thoughts "that are either true, or fine, or noble;" and further, "in the neighing of a horse, or in the growling of a mastiff, there is a meaning, there is as lively expression, and, may I say, more humanity, than many times in the tragical flights of Shakespear." The crowning glory of the treatise is the mode in which the critic disposes of the scene between Othello and Iago in the third act: —

"Then comes the wonderful scene where Iago, by shrugs, half-words, and ambiguous reflections, works Othello up to be jealous. One might think, after what we have seen, that there needs no great cunning, no great poetry and address, to make the Moor jealous. Such impatience, such a rout for a handsome young fellow, the very morning after her marriage, must make him either to be jealous, or to take her for a changeling below his jealousy. After this scene it might strain the poet's skill to reconcile the couple, and allay the jealousy. Iago now can only *actum agere*, and vex the audience with a nauseous repetition. Whence comes it, then, that this is the top scene—the scene that raises Othello above all other tragedies in our theatres? It is purely from the action, from the mops and the mows, the grimace, the grins and gesticula-

tion. Such scenes as this have made all the world run after Harlequin and Scaramuccio."

The conclusion of this prodigious piece of criticism must conclude our extracts from Thomas Rymer: —

"What can remain with the audience to carry home with them from this sort of poetry, for their use and edification? How can it work unless (instead of settling the mind, and purging our passions) to delude our senses, disorder our thoughts, addle our brain, pervert our affections, hair our imaginations, corrupt our appetite, and fill our head with vanity, confusion, tintamarre, and jingle-jangle beyond what all the parish-clerks of London, with their Old Testament farces and interludes, in Richard the Second's time, could ever pretend to? Our only hopes, for the good of their souls, can be, that these people go to the playhouse as they do to church, to sit still, look on one another, make no reflection, nor mind the play more than they would a sermon. There is in this play some burlesque, some humour and ramble of comical wit, some show, and some mimicry to divert the spectators: but the tragical part is plainly none other than a bloody farce, without salt or savour."

We cannot agree with the author of an able article in "The Retrospective Review," that "these attacks on Shakespear are very curious, as evincing how gradual has been the increase of his fame;" that "their whole tone shows that

the author was not advancing what he thought the world would regard as paradoxical or strange ;" that " he speaks as one with authority to decide." So far from receiving Rymer's frenzied denunciations as an expression of public opinion, we regard them as the idiosyncrasies of a very singular individual, who is furious in the exact proportion that the public opinion differs from his own. He attacks Othello and Julius Cæsar, especially, because Betterton had for years been drawing crowds to his performance in those tragedies. He is one of those who glory in opposing the general opinion. In his first book, he says, " With the remaining tragedies I shall also send you some reflections on that ' Paradise Lost ' of Milton's, which some are pleased to call a poem." Dryden, the great critical authority of his day, before whose opinions all other men bowed, had in 1679 thus spoken of the origin of his great scene between Troilus and Hector : " The occasion of raising it was hinted to me by Mr. Betterton ; the contrivance and working of it was my own. They who think to do me an injury by saying that it is an imitation of the scene betwixt Brutus and Cassius, do me an honour by supposing I could imitate the incomparable Shakespear." Dryden then goes on to contrast the modes in which Euripides, Fletcher, and Shakspeare have managed the quarrel of two virtuous men, raised to the extremity of passion, and ending in the renewal of their

friendship; and he says, "The particular groundwork which Shakespear has taken is incomparably the best." This decision of Dryden would in those days dispose of the matter as a question of criticism. But out comes Rymer, who, in opposition to Dryden's judgment, and Betterton's applause, tells us, that Brutus and Cassius here act the part of mimics; are bullies and buffoons; are to exhibit "a trial of skill in huffing and swaggering, like two drunken Hectors for a two-penny reckoning." It may be true that "the author was not advancing what *he thought* the world would regard as paradoxical and strange;" for it is the commonest of self-delusions, even to the delusions of insanity, to believe that the whole world agrees with the most extravagant mistakes and the strangest paradoxes; and when Rymer, upon his critical throne, "speaks as one with authority to decide," his authority is as powerless as that of the madman in Hogarth, who sits in solitary nakedness upon his straw, with crown on head and sceptre in hand. Rymer is a remarkable example of an able man, in his own province, meddling with that of which he has not the slightest true conception. He is, perhaps, more denuded of the poetical sense than any man who ever attempted to be a critic in poetry: but he had real learning. Shakspeare fell into worse hands after Rymer. The "Man Mountain" was fastened to the ground by the Lilliputians, and the strings are only just now broken by which he was bound.

In the quotations which we have given from Dryden, it may be seen how reverently criticism was based upon certain laws which, however false might be their application, were nevertheless held to be tests of the merit of the highest poetical productions. Dryden was always balancing between the rigid application of these laws, and his own hearty admiration of those whose art had rejected them. If he had been less of a real poet himself, he might have become as furious a stickler for the canons of the ancients as Rymer was. With all his occasional expressions of hatred towards the French school of tragedy, he was unconsciously walking in the circle which the fashion of his age had drawn around all poetical invention. It was assuredly not yet the fashion of the people; for they clung to the school of poetry and passion with a love which no critical opinions could wholly subdue. It was not the fashion of those who had drunk their inspiration from the Elizabethan poets. It was not the fashion of Milton and his disciples. Hear how Edward Phillips speaks of Corneille in 1675:—"Corneille, the great dramatic writer of France, wonderfully applauded by the present age, both among his own countrymen and our Frenchly-affected English, for the amorous intrigues which, if not there before, he commonly thrusts into his tragedies and acted histories; the imitation whereof among us, and of the perpetual colloquy in rhyme, hath of late very much

corrupted our English stage." It was the spread of this fashion amongst the courtly *littérateurs* of the day that gave some encouragement to the extravagance of Rymer. The solemn harangues about decorum in tragedy, the unities, moral fitness, did not always present the ludicrous side, as it did in this learned madman, who sublimated the whole affair into the most delicious absurdity. We love him for it. His application of a "rule" to Fletcher's "Maid's Tragedy" is altogether such a beautiful exemplification of his mode of applying his critical knowledge, that we cannot forbear one more quotation from him:—"If I mistake not, in poetry, no woman is to kill a man, except her quality gives her the advantage above him; nor is a servant to kill the master, nor a private man, much less a subject, to kill a king; nor on the contrary. Poetical decency will not suffer death to be dealt to each other by such persons whom the laws of duel allow not to enter the lists together." Rymer never changed his opinions. The principles upon which he founded his first book were carried to a greater height of extravagance in his second. Dryden, on the contrary, depreciates Shakspeare, though timidly and doubtfully, in his early criticisms, but warms into higher and higher admiration as he grows older. The "Defence of the Epilogue to the Conquest of Grenada," written in 1672, presents a curious contrast to "The Grounds of Criticism." He was

then a young poet, and wanted to thrust aside those who stood in the way of his stage popularity: "Let any man who understands English read diligently the works of Shakespear and Fletcher; and I dare undertake that he will find in every page some solecism of speech, or some notorious flaw in sense: and yet these men are revered when we are not forgiven. . . .

. . . But the times were ignorant in which they lived. Poetry was then, if not in its infancy among us, at least not arrived to its vigour and maturity; witness the lameness of their plots." This was the self-complacency which the maturer thoughts of a vigorous mind corrected. But nothing could correct the critical obstinacy of Rymer. Dryden's poetical soul mounted above the growing feebleness of his age's criticism, till at last, when he attempted to deal with Shakspeare in the spirit of his age, he became a worshipper instead of a mocker:—

"And those who came to scoff remain'd to pray."

The age laid its leaden sceptre upon the smaller minds, and especially upon those who approached Shakspeare with a cold and creeping admiration. Of such was Charles Gildon. In 1694 he appeared in the world with "Some Reflections on Mr. Rymer's Short View of Tragedy, and an Attempt at a Vindication of Shakespear." It would be a waste of time to produce the antagonist of Rymer armed *cap-à-pié*, and

set these two doughty combatants in mortal fight with their sacks of sand. It will be sufficient for us to quote a few passages from Gildon's "Essay on the Art, Rise, and Progress of the Stage," 1710, by way of showing, what indeed may be inferred from Rymer's own book, that the people were against the critics: — "'Tis my opinion that, if Shakespear had had those advantages of learning which the perfect knowledge of the ancients would have given him, so great a genius as his would have made him a very dangerous rival in fame to the greatest poets of antiquity; so far am I from seeing how this knowledge could either have ~~cubed~~ ^{cubed}, confined, or spoiled the natural excellence of his writings. For though I must always think our author a miracle for the age he lived in, yet I am obliged, in justice to reason and art, to confess that he does not come up to the ancients in all the beauties of the drama. But it is no small honour to him, that he has surpassed them in the topics or commonplaces. And to confirm the victory he obtained on that head at Mr. Hales's chamber, at Eton, I shall, in this present undertaking, not only transcribe the most shining, but refer the reader to the same subjects in the Latin authors. This I do that I might omit nothing that could do his memory that justice which he really deserves: but to put his errors and his excellences on the same bottom is to injure the latter, and give the enemies of our poet an

advantage against him, of doing the same ; that is, of rejecting his beauties, as all of a piece with his faults. This unaccountable bigotry of the town to the very errors of Shakespear was the occasion of Mr. Rymer's criticisms, and drove him as far into the contrary extreme. I am far from approving his manner of treating our poet ; though Mr. Dryden owns, that all, or most, of the faults he has found are just ; but adds this odd reflection : And yet, says he, who minds the critic, and who admires Shakespear less ? That was as much as to say, Mr. Rymer has indeed made good his charge, and yet the town admired his errors still : which I take to be a greater proof of the folly and abandoned taste of the town than of any imperfections in the critic ; which, in my opinion, exposed the ignorance of the age he lived in ; to which Mr. Rowe very justly ascribes most of his faults. It must be owned that Mr. Rymer carried the matter too far, since no man that has the least relish of poetry can question his genius ; for, in spite of his known and visible errors, when I read Shakespear, even in some of his most irregular plays, I am surprised into a pleasure so great, that my judgment is no longer free to see the faults, though they are never so gross and evident. There is such a witchery in him that all the rules of art which he does not observe, though built on an equally solid and infallible reason, vanish away in the transports of those

that he does observe, so entirely as if I had never known anything of the matter." The rules of art ! It was the extraordinary folly of the age which produced these observations to believe that Shakspeare realized his great endeavours without any rule at all, that is, without any method. Rymer was such a thorough believer in the infallibility of these rules of art, that he shut his eyes to the very highest power of Shakspeare, because it did not agree with these rules. Gildon believed in the power, and believed in the rules at the same time : hence his contradictions. "The unaccountable bigotry of the town to the very errors of Shakespear" was the best proof of the triumphant privilege of genius to abide in full power and tranquillity amidst its own rules. The small poets, and the smaller critics, were working upon mechanic rules. When they saw in Shakspeare something like an adherence to ancient rules of art, they cried out, Wonderful power of nature ! When they detected a deviation, they exclaimed, Pitiable calamity of ignorance ! It is evident that these critics could not subject the people to their laws ; and they despise the ignorant people, therefore, as they pity the ignorant Shakspeare. Hear Gildon again : — "A judicious reader of our author will easily discover those defects that his beauties would make him wish had been corrected by a knowledge of the whole art of the drama. For it is evident that, by the force of his own judgment, or the strength of

his imagination, he has followed the rules of art in all those particulars in which he pleases. I know that the rules of art have been sufficiently clamoured against by an ignorant and thoughtless sort of men of our age ; but it was because they knew nothing of them, and never considered that without some standard of excellence there could be no justice done to merit, to which poetasters and poets must else have an equal claim, which is the highest degree of barbarism. Nay, without an appeal to these very rules, Shakespear himself is not to be distinguished from the most worthless pretenders, who have often met with an undeserved applause, and challenge the title of great poets from their success." We will only anticipate for a moment the philosophical wisdom of a later school of criticism, to supply an answer to Gildon: "The spirit of poetry, like all other living powers, must of necessity circumscribe itself by rules, were it only to unite power with beauty. It must embody in order to reveal itself ; but a living body is of necessity an organized one ; and what is organization but the connection of parts in and for a whole, so that each part is at once end and means ?" *

The redoubted John Dennis was another of the antagonists of Rymer. He carried heavier metal than Gildon ; but he nevertheless belonged to the cuckoo school of "rules of art." He had a just appreciation of Shakspeare as far as he

* Coleridge.

went; and a few of his judgments certainly deserve a place in this History of Opinion: — “Shakespear was one of the greatest geniuses that the world ever saw for the tragic stage. Though he lay under greater disadvantages than any of his successors, yet had he greater and more genuine beauties than the best and greatest of them. And what makes the brightest glory of his character, those beauties were entirely his own, and owing to the force of his own nature; whereas his faults were owing to his education, and to the age that he lived in. One may say of him as they did of Homer — that he had none to imitate, and is himself inimitable. His imaginations were often as just as they were bold and strong. He had a natural discretion which never could have been taught him, and his judgment was strong and penetrating. He seems to have wanted nothing but time and leisure for thought, to have found out those rules of which he appears so ignorant. His characters are always drawn justly, exactly, graphically, except where he failed by not knowing history or the poetical art. He has for the most part more fairly distinguished them than any of his successors have done, who have falsified them, or confounded them, by making love the predominant quality in all. He had so fine a talent for touching the passions, they are so lively in him, and so truly in nature, that they often touch us more without their due preparations than those

of other tragic poets who have all the beauty of design and all the advantage of incidents. His master-passion was terror, which he has often moved so powerfully and so wonderfully, that we may justly conclude that, if he had had the advantage of art and learning, he would have surpassed the very best and strongest of the ancients. His paintings are often so beautiful and so lively, so graceful and so powerful, especially where he uses them in order to move terror, that there is nothing perhaps more accomplished in our English poetry. His sentiments, for the most part, in his best tragedies, are noble, generous, easy and natural, and adapted to the persons who use them. His expression is in many places good and pure after a hundred years; simple, though elevated — graceful, though bold — and easy, though strong. He seems to have been the very original of our English tragical harmony; that is, the harmony of blank verse, diversified often by dissyllable and trisyllable terminations. For that diversity distinguishes it from heroic harmony, and, bringing it nearer to common use, makes it more proper to gain attention, and more fit for action and dialogue. Such verse we make when we are writing prose; we make such verse in common conversation. If Shakespear had these great qualities by nature, what would he not have been if he had joined to so happy a genius learning and the poetical art!"

It was this eternal gabble about rules of art, this blindness to the truth that the living power of Shakspeare had its own organization, that set the metre-mongers of that day upon the task of improving Shakspeare. Dennis was himself one of the great improvers. Poetical justice was one of the rules for which they clamoured. Duncan and Banquo ought not to perish in Macbeth, nor Desdemona in Othello, nor Cordelia and her father in Lear, nor Brutus in Julius Cæsar, nor young Hamlet in Hamlet. So Dennis argues : — “ The good and the bad perishing promiscuously in the best of Shakspeare’s tragedies, there can be either none or very weak instruction in them.” In this spirit Dennis himself sets to work to remodel Coriolanus : — “ Not only Aufidius, but the Roman tribunes Sicinius and Brutus, appear to me to cry aloud for poetic vengeance ; for they are guilty of two faults, neither of which ought to go unpunished.” Dennis is not only a mender of Shakspeare’s catastrophes, but he applies himself to make Shakspeare’s verses all smooth and proper, according to the rules of art. One example will be sufficient. He was no common man who attempted to reduce the following lines to classical regularity : —

“ Boy ! False hound !

If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there,
That, like an eagle in a dovecote, I
Flutter'd your Volsces in Corioli.
Alone I did it — Boy ! ”

John Dennis has accomplished the feat: —

“ This boy, that, like an eagle in a dovecote,
Flutter'd a thousand Volsces in Corioli,
And did it without second or acquittance,
Thus sends their mighty chief to mourn in hell.”

The alteration of “ The Tempest ” by Davenant and Dryden was, as we have mentioned, an attempt to meet the taste of the town by music and spectacle. Shadwell went farther, and turned it into a regular opera ; and an opera it remained even in Garrick's time, who tried his hand upon the same experiment. Dennis was a reformer both in comedy and tragedy. He metamorphosed *The Merry Wives of Windsor* into “ *The Comical Gallant*,” and prefixed an essay to it on the degeneracy of the taste for poetry. Davenant changed *Measure for Measure* into “ *The Law against Lovers*.” It is difficult to understand how a clever man and something of a poet should have set about his work after this fashion. This is Shakspeare's *Isabella* : —

“ Could great men thunder
As Jove himself does, Jove would ne'er be quiet,
For every pelting, petty officer
Would use his heaven for thunder : nothing but thunder.
Merciful heaven !
Thou rather, with thy sharp and sulphurous bolt,
Splitt'st the unwedgeable and gnarled oak,
Than the soft myrtle.”

This is Davenant's : —

“ If men could thunder
As great Jove does, Jove ne'er would quiet be ;

For every choleric petty officer,
Would use his magazine in heaven for thunder:
We nothing should but thunder hear. Sweet Heaven:
Thou rather with thy stiff and sulph'rous bolt
Dost split the knotty and obdurate oak,
Than the soft myrtle."

"The Law against Lovers" was in principle one of the worst of these alterations; for it was a hash of two plays—of Measure for Measure, and of Much Ado about Nothing. This was indeed to destroy the organic life of the author. But it is one of the manifestations of the vitality of Shakspeare that, going about their alterations in the regular way, according to the rules of art, the most stupid and prosaic of his improvers have been unable to deprive the natural man of his vigour, even by their most violent depletions. His robustness was too great even for the poetical doctors to destroy it. Lord Lansdowne actually stripped the flesh off Shylock, but the anatomy walked about vigorously for sixty years, till Macklin put the muscles on again. Colley Cibber turned King John into "Papal Tyranny," and the stage King John was made to denounce the Pope and Guy Faux for a century, till Mr. Macready gave us back again the weak and crafty king in his original truth of character. Nahum Tate deposed the Richard II. of Shakspeare wholly and irredeemably, turning him into "The Sicilian Usurper." How Cibber manufactured Richard III. is known to all men. Duffey melted down Cymbeline with no

slight portion of alloy. Tate remodelled Lear,—and such a Lear! Davenant mangled Macbeth; but we can hardly quarrel with him for it, for he gave us the music of Locke in company with his own verses. It has been said, as a proof how little Shakspeare was once read, that Davenant's alteration is quoted in "The Tatler" instead of the original. This is the reasoning of Steevens; but he has not the candour to tell us, that in "The Tatler," No. 111., there is a quotation from Hamlet, with the following remarks:—"This admirable author, as well as the best and greatest men of all ages and of all nations, seems to have had his mind thoroughly seasoned with religion, as is evident by many passages in his plays, that would not be suffered by a modern audience." Steevens infers, that Steele, or Addison, was not a reader of Shakspeare, because Macbeth is quoted from an acted edition; and that, therefore, Shakspeare was not read generally. If a hurried writer in a daily paper (as "The Tatler" was) were to quote from some acted editions at the present day he might fall into the same error; and yet he might be an ardent student of Shakspeare, in a nation of enthusiastic admirers. The early Essayists offer abundant testimonies, indeed, of their general admiration of the poet. In No. 68. of "The Tatler," he is "the great master who ever commands our tears." In No. 160. of "The Spectator" Shakspeare is put amongst the first class of great geniuses, in com-

pany with Homer ; and this paper contains a remarkable instance of a juster taste than one might expect from the author of "Cato :"—"We are to consider that the rule of observing what the French call the *bienséance* in an allusion has been found out of later years, and in the colder regions of the world ; where we could make some amends for our want of force and spirit, by a scrupulous nicety and exactness in our compositions."* In "The Spectator," 419., amongst the papers on "The Pleasures of the Imagination," Shakspeare's delineations of supernatural beings are thus mentioned :—"Among the English, Shakspeare has incomparably excelled all others. That noble extravagance of fancy, which he had in so great perfection, thoroughly qualified him to touch this weak superstitious part of his reader's imagination ; and made him capable of succeeding where he had nothing to support him besides the strength of his own genius. There is something so wild, and yet so solemn, in the speeches of his ghosts, fairies, witches, and the like imaginary persons, that we cannot forbear thinking them natural, though we have no rule by which to judge of them ; and must confess, if there are such beings in the

* Mr. De Quincey is certainly mistaken when he says, that "Addison has never in one instance quoted or made any reference to Shakspear." No. 160. bears the signature of C., and immediately follows "The Vision of Mirza," bearing the same signature.

world, it looks highly probable they should talk and act as he has represented them."

We have again an instance of Addison's good taste in his remarks upon the critical notions of poetical justice, which he calls "a ridiculous doctrine in modern criticism." Of the best plays which end unhappily he mentions Othello, with others, and adds, "King Lear is an admirable tragedy of the same kind, as Shakspeare wrote it; but as it is reformed according to the chimerical notion of poetical justice, in my humble opinion it has lost half its beauty." All this exhibits a better taste than we find in Gildon and Dennis; and it certainly is very remarkable that Addison, who in his own tragedy was laboriously correct, as it was called, should have taken no occasion to comment upon the irregularities of Shakspeare. Mr. De Quincey says of Addison, "The feeble constitution of the poetic faculty as existing in himself forbad him sympathising with Shakespear." The feebleness of the poetic faculty makes the soundness of the judgment more conspicuous.

CHAPTER IV.

THE commencement of the eighteenth century produced the first of the critical editions of Shakspeare. In 1709 appeared "Shakespeare's Plays Revised and Corrected, with an Account of his

Life and Writings, by N. Rowe." We should mention that the third edition of Shakspeare's Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies, in folio, appeared in 1664. It has been said that the greater number of the copies of this edition were destroyed in the Fire of London; and a writer whom we must once more quote says, "During a whole century, only four editions of his complete works, and these small, were published; and there would only have been three, but for the destructive Fire of London in 1666."* The destruction by the fire is just as much proved as the smallness of the edition. One of our best bibliographers, Mr. D'Onwdes, whose "Bibliographer's Manual" is a model of accuracy, doubts the statement of the destruction by the fire, "though it has been frequently repeated." Upon the face of it the statement is improbable. If it were a good speculation to print the book two years before the fire, and the stock so printed had been destroyed in the fire, it would have been an equally good speculation to have reprinted it immediately after the fire; and yet the fourth edition did not appear till 1685. Some of the copies of the third edition bear the date of 1668; and we have no doubt that the book was then generally published; for Pepys, under the date of December 10th, 1663, has a curious bibliographical entry:—"To St. Paul's Churchyard, to my bookseller's, and could not

* Life of Shakespear in "Lardner's Cyclopædia."

tell whether to lay out my money for books of pleasure, as plays, which my nature was most earnest in ; but at last, after seeing Chaucer, Dugdale's ' History of Paul's,' Stow's ' London,' Gesner, ' History of Trent,' besides Shakespeare, Jonson, and Beaumont's plays, I at last chose Dr. Fuller's ' Worthies,' ' The Cabbala, or Collections of Letters of State,' and a little book, ' Delices de Hollande,' with another little book or two, all of good use or serious pleasure ; and ' Hudibras,' both parts, the book now in greatest fashion for drollery, though I cannot, I confess, see enough where the wit lies." These two folio editions supplied the readers of Shakspeare for more than forty years, but we are not hence to conclude that he was neglected. Of Ben Jonson during the same period there was only one edition ; of Beaumont and Fletcher only one ; of Spenser only one. Rowe's edition of Shakspeare, we doubt not, supplied a general want. Its critical merits were but small. The facts of the " Life " which he prefixes have been sufficiently noticed by us in another place. The opinions expressed in that " Life " are few, and are put forth with little pretension. As might be expected they fully admit the excellence of Shakspeare, but they somewhat fall into the besetting sin of attempting to elevate his genius by depreciating his knowledge :—" It is without controversy that in his works we scarce find any traces of anything that looks like an imitation of the ancients. The

delicacy of his taste, and the natural bent of his own great genius (equal, if not superior, to some of the best of theirs), would certainly have led him to read and study them with so much pleasure that some of their fine images would naturally have insinuated themselves into, and been mixed with, his own writings; so that his not copying at least something from them may be an argument of his never having read them. Whether his ignorance of the ancients were a disadvantage to him or no, may admit of a dispute: for though the knowledge of them might have made him more correct, yet it is not improbable but that the regularity and deference for them, which would have attended that correctness, might have restrained some of that fire, impetuosity, and even beautiful extravagance, which we admire in Shakspeare: and I believe we are better pleased with those thoughts, altogether new and uncommon, which his own imagination supplied him so abundantly with, than if he had given us the most beautiful passages out of the Greek and Latin poets, and that in the most agreeable manner that it was possible for a master of the English language to deliver them." Rowe also falls into the notion that Shakspeare did not arrive at his perfection by repeated experiment and assiduous labour,—a theory which still has its believers:—"It would be without doubt a pleasure to any man, curious in things of this kind, to see and know what was the first essay of a fancy like Shakspeare's. Perhaps we are not to

look for his beginnings, like those of other authors, among their least perfect writings ; art had so little, and nature so large a share in what he did, that, for aught I know, the performances of his youth, as they were the most vigorous, and had the most fire and strength of imagination in them, were the best. I would not be thought by this to mean that his fancy was so loose and extravagant as to be independent on the rule and government of judgment ; but that what he thought was commonly so great, so justly and rightly conceived in itself, that it wanted little or no correction, and was immediately approved by an impartial judgment at the first sight." He then enters into a brief criticism of some of the leading plays. In speaking of *The Tempest*, he mentions the observation upon the character of Caliban " which three very great men concurred in making "—telling us in a note that these were Lord Falkland, Lord Chief Justice Vaughan, and Mr. Selden—" That Shakspeare had not only found out a new character in his Caliban, but had also devised and adapted a new manner of language for that character." Of Shakspeare's plays, with reference to their art, he thus speaks :—" If one undertook to examine the greatest part of these by those rules which are established by Aristotle and taken from the model of the Grecian stage, it would be no very hard task to find a great many faults ; but as Shakspeare lived under a kind of mere light of nature, and had never been made

acquainted with the regularity of those written precepts, so it would be hard to judge him by a law he knew nothing of. We are to consider him as a man that lived in a state of almost universal licence and ignorance: there was no established judge, but every one took the liberty to write according to the dictates of his own fancy. When one considers that there is not one play before him of a reputation good enough to entitle it to an appearance on the present stage, it cannot but be a matter of great wonder that he should advance dramatic poetry so far as he did." A second edition of Rowe's "Shakespeare" appeared in 1714.

In 1725 Pope produced his edition, magnificent as far as printing went, in six volumes quarto. Of its editorial merits we may say a few words when we have to speak of Theobald. His Preface is a masterly composition, containing many just views elegantly expressed. The criticism is neither profound nor original; but there is a tone of quiet sense about it which shows that Pope properly appreciated Shakspeare's general excellence. He believes, in common with most of his time, that this excellence was attained by intuition; and that the finest results were produced by felicitous accidents:—

"If ever any author deserved the name of an *original* it was Shakspeare. Homer himself drew not his art so immediately from the fountains of nature, it proceeded through Egyptian

strainers and channels, and came to him not without some tincture of the learning, or some cast of the models, of those before him. The poetry of Shakspeare was inspiration indeed : he is not so much an imitator as an instrument of Nature ; and it is not so just to say that he speaks from her, as that she speaks through him.

“ His *characters* are so much Nature herself, that it is a sort of injury to call them by so distant a name as copies of her. Those of other poets have a constant resemblance, which shows that they received them from one another, and were but multipliers of the same image : each picture, like a mock-rainbow, is but the reflection of a reflection. But every single character in Shakspeare is as much an individual as those in life itself ; it is as impossible to find any two alike ; and such as from their relation or affinity in any respect appear most to be twins, will, upon comparison, be found remarkably distinct. To this life and variety of character we must add the wonderful preservation of it ; which is such throughout his plays, that, had all the speeches been printed without the very names of the persons, I believe one might have applied them with certainty to every speaker.

“ The *power* over our *passions* was never possessed in a more eminent degree, or displayed in so different instances. Yet all along there is seen no labour, no pains to raise them ; no preparation to guide or guess to the effect, or be perceived to

lead toward it ; but the heart swells, and the tears burst out, just at the proper places : we are surprised the moment we weep ; and yet upon reflection find the passion so just, that we should be surprised if we had not wept, and wept at that very moment.

“ How astonishing it is again that the passions directly opposite to these, laughter and spleen, are no less at his command ! That he is not more a master of the *great* than of the *ridiculous* in human nature ; of our noblest tendernesses, than of our vainest foibles ; of our strongest emotions, than of our idlest sensations !

“ Nor does he only excel in the passions ; in the coolness of reflection and reasoning he is full as admirable. His *sentiments* are not only in general the most pertinent and judicious upon every subject ; but, by a talent very peculiar, something between penetration and felicity, he hits upon that particular point on which the bent of each argument turns, or the force of each motive depends. This is perfectly amazing from a man of no education or experience in those great and public scenes of life which are usually the subject of his thoughts ; so that he seems to have known the world by intuition, to have looked through human nature at one glance, and to be the only author that gives ground for a very new opinion—that the philosopher, and even the man of the world, may be *born* as well as the poet.”

These are the excellences of Shakspeare ; but Pope holds that he has as great defects, and he sets himself to excuse these by arguing that it was necessary to please the populace. He then proceeds : —

“ To judge, therefore, of Shakspeare by Aristotle’s rules, is like trying a man by the laws of one country who acted under those of another. He wrote to the *people*, and wrote at first without patronage from the better sort, and therefore without aims of pleasing them ; without assistance or advice from the learned, as without the advantage of education or acquaintance among them ; without that knowledge of the best models, the ancients, to inspire him with an emulation of them ; in a word, without any views of reputation, and of what poets are pleased to call immortality ; some or all of which have encouraged the vanity, or animated the ambition, of other writers.

“ Yet it must be observed, that, when his performances had merited the protection of his prince, and when the encouragement of the court had succeeded to that of the town, the works of his riper years are manifestly raised above those of his former. The dates of his plays sufficiently evidence that his productions improved in proportion to the respect he had for his auditors. And I make no doubt this observation would be found true in every instance, were but editions extant from which we might learn the exact time

when every piece was composed, and whether wrote for the town or the court.

“ Another cause (and no less strong than the former) may be deduced from our poet’s being a *player*, and forming himself first upon the judgments of that body of men whereof he was a member. They have ever had a standard to themselves, upon other principles than those of Aristotle. As they live by the majority, they know no rule but that of pleasing the present humour, and complying with the wit in fashion—a consideration which brings all their judgment to a short point. Players are just such judges of what is *right* as tailors are of what is *graceful*.⁴ And in this view it will be but fair to allow that most of our author’s faults are less to be ascribed to his wrong judgment as a poet than to his right judgment as a player.”

Of Shakspeare’s learning his editor thus speaks : —

“ As to his *want of learning* it may be necessary to say something more : there is certainly a vast difference between *learning* and *languages*. How far he was ignorant of the latter I cannot determine ; but it is plain he had much reading at least, if they will not call it learning. Nor is it any great matter, if a man has knowledge, whether he has it from one language or from another. Nothing is more evident than that he had a taste of natural philosophy, mechanics, ancient and modern history, poetical learning, and mythology :

we find him very knowing in the customs, rites, and manners of antiquity. . . . The manners of other nations in general, the Egyptians, Venetians, French, &c., are drawn with equal propriety. Whatever object of nature or branch of science he either speaks of or describes, it is always with competent if not extensive knowledge: his descriptions are still exact; all his metaphors appropriated, and remarkably drawn from the true nature and inherent qualities of each subject. When he treats of ethic or politic we may constantly observe a wonderful justness of distinction as well as extent of comprehension. No one is more a master of the poetical story, or has more frequent allusions to the various parts of it. Mr. Waller (who has been celebrated for this last particular) has not shown more learning this way than Shakspeare. . . .

“ I am inclined to think this opinion proceeded originally from the zeal of the partizans of our author and Ben Jonson, as they endeavoured to exalt the one at the expense of the other. It is ever the nature of parties to be in extremes; and nothing is so probable as that, because Ben Jonson had much the more learning, it was said on the one hand that Shakspeare had none at all; and because Shakspeare had much the most wit and fancy, it was retorted on the other that Jonson wanted both. Because Shakspeare borrowed nothing, it was said that Ben Jonson borrowed everything. Because Jonson did not write ex-

tempore, he was reproached with being a year about every piece ; and because Shakspeare wrote with ease and rapidity, they cried, he never once made a blot. Nay, the spirit of opposition ran so high, that whatever those of the one side objected to the other was taken at the rebound, and turned into praises, as injudiciously as their antagonists before had made them objections."

Much of Pope's Preface is then occupied with illustrations of his opinion that Shakspeare's works have come down to us defaced with innumerable blunders and absurdities which are not to be attributed to the author. We cannot at all yield our consent to this opinion; which goes upon the assumption that, whenever there is an obscure passage ; whenever "mean conceits and ribaldries" are found ; whenever "low scenes of mobs, plebeians, and clowns" are very prominent ; there the players have been at work ; and he thus argues upon the assumption :—"If we give in to this opinion, how many low and vicious parts and passages might no longer reflect upon this great genius, but appear unworthily charged upon him ! And even in those which are really his, how many faults may have been unjustly laid to his account from arbitrary additions, expunctions, transpositions of scenes and lines, confusion of characters and persons, wrong application of speeches, corruptions of innumerable passages by the ignorance and wrong corrections of them again by the impertinence of his first editors !

From one or other of these considerations I am verily persuaded that the greatest and the grossest part of what are thought his errors would vanish, and leave his character in a light very different from that disadvantageous one in which it now appears to us." There is a larger question even than this that Pope propounds. *Are these parts and passages low and vicious? Have we these corruptions and imperfections? We believe not.* Pope accepted Shakspeare in the spirit of his time, and that was not favourable to the proper understanding of him. His concluding observations are characteristic of his critical power:—"I will conclude by saying of Shakspeare, that, with all his faults, and with all the irregularity of his *drama*, one may look upon his works, in comparison of those that are more finished and regular as upon an ancient majestic piece of Gothic architecture compared with a neat modern building; the latter is more elegant and glaring, but the former is more strong and more solemn. It must be allowed that in one of these there are materials enough to make many of the other. It has much the greater variety, and much the nobler apartments; though we are often conducted to them by dark, odd, and uncouth passages. Nor does the whole fail to strike us with greater reverence though many of the parts are childish, ill-placed, and unequal to its grandeur."

In 1726 Lewis Theobald published a tract entitled "Shakespear Restored, or Specimens of

Blunders Committed and Unamended in Pope's Edition of this Poet." In Pope's second edition of Shakspeare, which appeared in 1728, was inserted this contemptuous notice:—"Since the publication of our first edition, there having been some attempts upon Shakspeare published by Lewis Theobald (which he would not communicate during the time wherein that edition was preparing for the press, when we, by public advertisements, did request the assistance of all lovers of this author), we have inserted, in this impression, as many of 'em as are judged of any the least advantage to the poet; the whole amounting to about twenty-five words." In the same year came out "The Dunciad," of which Theobald was the hero:—

"High on a gorgeous seat that far outshone
Henley's gilt tub, or Flecknoe's Irish throne,
Great Tibbald nods."

In a few years Theobald was deposed from this throne, and there, then, "Great Cibber sate." The facility with which Theobald was transformed to Cibber is one of the many proofs that Pope threw his darts and dirt about him at random. But Theobald took a just revenge. In 1733 he produced an edition of Shakspeare, in seven volumes octavo, which annihilated Pope's quartos and duodecimos. The title-page of Theobald's Shakspeare bore that it was "collated with the oldest copies, and corrected, with Notes." Pope's edition was not again reprinted in London; but

of Theobald's there have been many subsequent editions, and Steevens asserts that of his first edition thirteen thousand copies were sold. Looking at the advantage which Pope possessed in the pre-eminence of his literary reputation, the preference which was so decidedly given to Theobald's editions is a proof that the public thought for themselves in the matter of Shakspeare. Pope was not fitted for the more laborious duties of an editor. He collated, indeed, the early copies, but he set about the emendation of the text in a manner so entirely arbitrary, suppressing passage after passage upon the principle that the players had been at work here, and a blundering transcriber there, that no reader of Shakspeare could rely upon the integrity of Pope's version. Theobald states the contrary mode in which *he* proceeded : —

“ Wherever the author's sense is clear and discoverable (though, perchance, low and trivial), I have not by any innovation tampered with his text, out of an ostentation of endeavouring to make him speak better than the old copies have done.

“ Where, through all the former editions, a passage has laboured under flat nonsense and invincible darkness, if by the addition or alteration of a letter or two, or a transposition in the pointing, I have restored to him both sense and sentiment, such corrections, I am persuaded, will need no indulgence.

“ And whenever I have taken a greater latitude

and liberty in amending, I have constantly endeavoured to support my corrections and conjectures by parallel passages and authorities from himself, the surest means of expounding any author whatsoever."

Dr. Johnson accurately enough describes the causes and consequences of Pope's failure: — "Confidence is the common consequence of success. They whose excellence of any kind has been loudly celebrated are ready to conclude that their powers are universal. Pope's edition fell below his own expectations, and he was so much offended, when he was found to have left anything for others to do, that he passed the latter part of his life in a state of hostility with verbal criticism." But Johnson does not exhibit his usual good sense and knowledge of mankind when he attributes Theobald's success to the world's compassion. He calls him weak and ignorant, mean and faithless, petulant and ostentatious; but he affirms that this editor, "by the good luck of having Pope for his enemy, has escaped, and escaped alone, with reputation, from this undertaking. So willingly does the world support those who solicit favour against those who command reverence; and so easily is he praised whom no man can envy." This is mere fine writing. The real secret of Theobald's success is stated by Johnson himself: — "Pope was succeeded by Theobald, a man of narrow comprehension and small acquisitions, with no native and intrinsic splendour of genius, with little of the

artificial light of learning, but zealous for minute accuracy, and not negligent in pursuing it. He collated the ancient copies, and rectified many errors. A man so anxiously scrupulous might have been expected to do more, but what little he did was commonly right." It was because Theobald was "anxiously scrupulous," because he did not attempt "to do more" than an editor ought to do, that he had the public support. Nearly every succeeding editor, in his scorn of Theobald, his confidence in himself, and, what was the most influential, his want of reverence for his author, endeavoured to make Shakspeare "speak better than the old copies have done." Each for a while had his applause, but it was not a lasting fame.

There is little in Theobald's Preface to mark the progress of opinion on the writings of Shakspeare. Some parts of this Preface are held to have been written by Warburton ; but if so, his arrogance must have been greatly modified by Theobald's judgment. There is not much general remark upon the character of the poet's writings; but what we find is sensibly conceived and not inelegantly expressed. We shall content ourselves with extracting one passage :— "In how many points of sight must we be obliged to gaze at this great poet ! In how many branches of excellence to consider and admire him ! Whether we view him on the side of art or nature, he ought equally to engage our attention : whether we respect the force and greatness of his genius, the extent of his know-

ledge and reading, the power and address with which he throws out and applies either nature or learning, there is ample scope both for our wonder and pleasure. If his diction and the clothing of his thoughts attract us, how much more must we be charmed with the richness and variety of his images and ideas ! If his images and ideas steal into our souls and strike upon our fancy, how much are they improved in price when we come to reflect with what propriety and justness they are applied to character ! If we look into his characters, and how they are furnished and proportioned to the employment he cuts out for them, how are we taken up with the mastery of his portraits ! What draughts of nature ! What variety of originals, and how differing each from the other !”

Undeterred by the failure of Pope in his slashing amputations, Sir Thomas Hanmer appeared, in 1744, with a splendid edition in six volumes quarto, printed at the Oxford University Press. Nothing can be more satisfactory than the paper and the type. The work was intended as a monument to the memory of Shakspeare ; one of the modes in which the national homage was to be expressed:—“As a fresh acknowledgment hath lately been paid to his merit, and a high regard to his name and memory, by erecting his statue at a public expense ; so it is desired that this new edition of his works, which hath cost some attention and care, may be looked upon as another small

monument designed and dedicated to his honour." Capell, who came next as an editor, says truly of Hanmer that he "pursues a track in which it is greatly to be hoped he will never be followed in the publication of any authors whatsoever, for this were in effect to annihilate them if carried a little further." Collins's "Epistle to Sir Thomas Hanmer on his Edition on Shakspeare's Works" is an elegant though not very vigorous attempt to express the universal admiration that the people of England felt for the great national poet. The verse-homage to Shakspeare after the days of Milton had no very original character. The cuckoo-note with which these warblers generally interspersed their varied lays was the echo of Milton's "wood-notes wild," which they did not perceive had a limited application to some particular play—As You Like It, for instance. In Rowe's prologue to "Jane Shore" we have,—

"In such an age immortal Shakspeare wrote,
By no quaint rules nor hamp'ring critics taught;
With rough majestic force he mov'd the heart,
And strength and nature made amends for art."

Thomson asks —

"For lofty sense,
Creative fancy, and inspection keen
Through the deep windings of the human heart,
Is not wild Shakspeare thine and nature's boast?"

T. Seward, addressing Stratford, says,—

"Thy bard was thine unschool'd."

Collins's Epistle begins thus, speaking of the works of Shakspeare:—

“ Hard was the lot those injur'd strains endure'd,
Unown'd by science.”

But Collins, in many respects a true poet, has a higher inspiration in his invocations of the great master of the drama than most of his fellows : —

“ O more than all in powerful genius bless'd,
Come, take thine empire o'er the willing breast !
Whate'er the wounds this youthful heart shall feel,
Thy songs support me, and thy morals heal.
There every thought the poet's warmth may raise,
There native music dwells in all the lays.”

To Hanmer succeeded Warburton, with a new edition of Pope enriched with his own most original notes. If it were not painful to associate Shakspeare, the great master of practical wisdom, with a critic who delights in the most extravagant paradoxes, we might prefer the amusement of Warburton's edition to toiling through the heaps of verbal criticism which later years saw heaped up. Warburton, of course, belonged to the school of slashing emendators. The opening of his preface tells us what we are to expect from him : —

“ It hath been no unusual thing for writers, when dissatisfied with the patronage or judgment of their own times, to appeal to posterity for a fair hearing. Some have even thought fit to apply to it in the first instance, and to decline acquaintance with the public till envy and prejudice had quite subsided. But of all the trusters to futurity, commend me to the author of the following poems, who not only left it to time to do him justice as it would, but to find him out as it could : for, what

between too great attention to his profit as a player, and too little to his reputation as a poet, his works, left to the care of door-keepers and prompters, hardly escaped the common fate of those writings, how good soever, which are abandoned to their own fortune, and unprotected by party or cabal. At length, indeed, they struggled into light ; but so disguised and travestied, that no classic author, after having run ten secular stages through the blind cloisters of monks and canons, ever came out in half so maimed and mangled a condition."

There is little in Warburton's preface which possesses any lasting interest, perhaps with the exception of his defence against the charge that editing Shakspeare was unsuitable to his clerical profession : —

" The great Saint Chrysostom, a name consecrated to immortality by his virtue and eloquence, is known to have been so fond of Aristophanes as to wake with him at his studies, and to sleep with him under his pillow ; and I never heard that this was objected either to his piety or his preaching, not even in those times of pure zeal and primitive religion. Yet, in respect of Shakspeare's great sense, Aristophanes's best wit is but buffoonery ; and in comparison of Aristophanes's freedoms, Shakspeare writes with the purity of a vestal. . . . Of all the literary exertions of speculative men, whether designed for the use or entertainment of the world, there are none of so much importance, or what are more our immediate concern, than

those which let us into the knowledge of our nature. Others may exercise the reason, or amuse the imagination ; but these only can improve the heart, and form the human mind to wisdom. Now, in this science our Shakspeare is confessed to occupy the foremost place, whether we consider the amazing sagacity with which he investigates every hidden spring and wheel of human action, or his happy manner of communicating this knowledge, in the just and living paintings which he has given us of all our passions, appetites, and pursuits. These afford a lesson which can never be too often repeated, or too constantly inculcated ; and to engage the reader's due attention to it hath been one of the principal objects of this edition.

“ As this science (whatever profound philosophers may think) is, to the rest, *in things*, so, *in words* (whatever supercilious pedants may talk), everyone's mother-tongue is to all other languages. This hath still been the sentiment of nature and true wisdom. Hence, the greatest men of antiquity never thought themselves better employed than in cultivating their own country idiom.”

CHAPTER V.

It was in the year 1741 that David Garrick at once leaped into eminence as an actor, such as had not been won by any man for half a century. He was the true successor of Betterton, Harris, and Bur-

bage. His principal fame was, however, like theirs, founded upon Shakspeare. But it is a mistake to imagine that there had not been a constant succession of actors of Shakspeare's great characters, from the death of Betterton to Garrick's appearance. His first character in London was Richard III. He made all the great parts of Shakspeare familiar to the play-going public for five-and-thirty years. "The Alchymist" and the "Volpone" of Ben Jonson were sometimes played; "The Chances," and "Rule a Wife and Have a Wife," of Beaumont and Fletcher; but we are told by Davies, in his "Dramatic Miscellanies," that, of their fifty-four plays, only these two preserved their rank on the stage. This is a pretty convincing proof of what the public opinion of Shakspeare was in the middle of the last century. The Prologue of Samuel Johnson, spoken by Garrick at the opening of Drury-lane Theatre in 1747, is an eloquent expression of the same opinion:—

"When Learning's triumph o'er her barbarous foes
First rear'd the stage, immortal Shakspeare rose;
Each change of many-colour'd life he drew,
Exhausted worlds, and then imagin'd new:
Existence saw him spurn her bounded reign,
And panting Time toil'd after him in vain.
His powerful strokes presiding truth impress'd,
And unresisted passion storm'd the breast.

"Then Jonson came, instructed from the school
To please in method, and invent by rule;
His studious patience and laborious art
By regular approach essay'd the heart:

Cold approbation gave the lingering bays ;
 For those who durst not censure scarce could praise.
 A mortal born, he met the gen'ral doom,
 But left, like Egypt's kings, a lasting tomb.

“ The wits of Charles found easier ways to fame,
 Nor wish'd for Jonson's art, or Shakspeare's fame.
 Themselves they studied ; as they felt, they writ :
 Intrigue was plot, obscenity was wit.
 Vice always found a sympathetic friend ;
 They pleas'd their age, and did not aim to mend.
 Yet bards like these aspir'd to lasting praise,
 And proudly hop'd to pimp in future days.
 Their cause was gen'ral, their supports were strong ;
 Their slaves were willing, and their reign was long :
 Till Shame regain'd the post that Sense betray'd,
 And Virtue call'd Oblivion to her aid.

“ Then, crush'd by rules, and weaken'd as refin'd,
 For years the pow'r of Tragedy declin'd ;
 From bard to bard the frigid caution crept,
 Till declamation roar'd whilst passion slept ;
 Yet still did Virtue deign the stage to tread,
 Philosophy remain'd though Nature fled.
 But forc'd, at length, her ancient reign to quit,
 She saw great Faustus lay the ghost of Wit ;
 Exulting Folly hail'd the joyous day.
 And pantomime and song confirm'd her sway.”

It is tolerably evident, from the whole tenour of this celebrated prologue, that of the early dramatists Shakspeare reigned upon the stage supreme, if not almost alone. It has been the fault of actors, and the flatterers of actors, to believe that a dramatic poet is only known to the world through their lips. Garrick was held to have given life to Shakspeare. The following inscrip-

tion on Garrick's tomb in Westminster Abbey has been truly held by Charles Lamb to be "a farrago of false thoughts and nonsense : " —

" To paint fair Nature, by divine command,
Her magic pencil in his glowing hand,
A Shakspeare rose ; then, to expand his fame
Wide o'er this breathing world, a Garrick came.
Though sunk to death the forms the Poet drew,
The Actor's genius bade them breathe anew ;
Though, like the bard himself, in night they lay,
Immortal Garrick call'd them back to day :
And till Eternity with power sublime
Shall mark the mortal hour of hoary 'Time,
Shakspeare and Garrick like twin stars shall shine,
And earth irradiate with a beam divine."

Up to the end of the first half of the eighteenth century, when, according to the epitaph, the poet's forms were sunk in death and lay in night, there had been thirteen editions of Shakspeare's collected works, nine of which had appeared during the preceding forty years. Of Ben Jonson there had been three editions in the seventeenth century, and one in the eighteenth ; of Beaumont and Fletcher two in the seventeenth century, and one in the eighteenth. Yet, absurd and impertinent as it may be to talk of immortal Garrick calling the plays of Shakspeare back to day, it cannot be denied that the very power of those plays to create a school of great actors was in itself a cause of their extension amongst readers. The most monstrous alterations, perpetrated with the worst taste, and with

the most essential ignorance of Shakspeare's art were still in some sort tributes to his power. The actors sent many to read Shakspeare with a true delight; and then it was felt how little he needed the aid of acting, and how much indeed of his highest excellence could only be received into the mind by reverent meditation.

In 1765 appeared, in eight volumes octavo, "The Plays of William Shakspeare, with the Corrections and Illustrations of various Commentators: to which are added Notes by Samuel Johnson." This was the foundation of the variorum editions, the principle of which has been to select from all the commentary, or nearly all, that has been produced, every opinion upon a passage, however conflicting. The respective value of the critics who had preceded him are fully discussed by Johnson in the latter part of his Preface: it will be unnecessary for us to enter upon this branch of the subject, which was only of temporary interest. But the larger portion of Johnson's Preface not only to a certain extent represents the tone of opinion in Johnson's age, but is written with so much pomp of diction, with such apparent candour, and with such abundant manifestations of good sense, that, perhaps, more than any other production, it has influenced the public opinion of Shakspeare up to this day. That the influence has been, for the most part, evil, we have no hesitation in believing. Before proceeding to state the grounds

of this belief we think it right to reprint the greater part of this celebrated composition — all, indeed, that permanently belongs to the subject of our poet : —

DR. JOHNSON'S PREFACE.

“THAT praises are without reason lavished on the dead, and that the honours due only to excellence are paid to antiquity, is a complaint likely to be always continued by those who, being able to add nothing to truth, hope for eminence from the heresies of paradox ; or those who, being forced by disappointment upon consolatory expedients, are willing to hope from posterity what the present age refuses, and flatter themselves that the regard which is yet denied by envy will be at last bestowed by time.

“Antiquity, like every other quality that attracts the notice of mankind, has undoubtedly votaries that reverence it, not from reason, but from prejudice. Some seem to admire indiscriminately whatever has been long preserved, without considering that time has sometimes co-operated with chance ; all perhaps are more willing to honour past than present excellence ; and the mind contemplates genius through the shades of age, as the eye surveys the sun through artificial opacity. The great contention of criticism is to find the faults of the moderns and the beauties of the ancients. While an author is yet living, we estimate his powers by his worst per-

formance ; and when he is dead, we rate them by his best.

“ To works, however, of which the excellence is not absolute and definite, but gradual and comparative ; to works not raised upon principles demonstrative and scientific, but appealing wholly to observation and experience, no other test can be applied than length of duration and continuance of esteem. What mankind have long possessed, they have often examined and compared ; and if they persist to value the possession, it is because frequent comparisons have confirmed opinion in its favour. As among the works of nature no man can properly call a river deep, or a mountain high, without the knowledge of many mountains and many rivers ; so, in the productions of genius, nothing can be styled excellent till it hath been compared with other works of the same kind. Demonstration immediately displays its power, and has nothing to hope or fear from the flux of years ; but works tentative and experimental must be estimated by their proportion to the general and collective ability of man, as it is discovered in a long succession of endeavours. Of the first building that was raised, it might be with certainty determined that it was round or square ; but whether it was spacious or lofty must have been referred to time. The Pythagorean scale of numbers was at once discovered to be perfect ; but the poems of Homer we yet know not to transcend the

common limits of human intelligence, but by remarking that nation after nation, and century after century, has been able to do little more than transpose his incidents, new name his characters, and paraphrase his sentiments.

“ The reverence due to writings that have long subsisted arises therefore not from any credulous confidence in the superior wisdom of past ages, or gloomy persuasion of the degeneracy of mankind, but is the consequence of acknowledged and indubitable positions, that what has been longest known has been most considered, and what is most considered is best understood.

“ The poet of whose works I have undertaken the revision may now begin to assume the dignity of an ancient, and claim the privilege of established fame and prescriptive veneration. He has long outlived his century, the term commonly fixed as the test of literary merit. Whatever advantages he might once derive from personal allusions, local customs, or temporary opinions, have for many years been lost ; and every topic of merriment, or motive of sorrow, which the modes of artificial life afforded him, now only obscure the scenes which they once illuminated. The effects of favour and competition are at an end ; the tradition of his friendships and his enmities has perished ; his works support no opinion with arguments, nor supply any faction with invectives ; they can neither indulge vanity nor gratify malignity ; but are read without any

other reason than the desire of pleasure, and are therefore praised only as pleasure is obtained : yet, thus unassisted by interest or passion, they have passed through variations of taste and changes of manners, and, as they devolved from one generation to another, have received new honours at every transmission.

“ But because human judgment, though it be gradually gaining upon certainty, never becomes infallible ; and approbation, though long continued, may yet be only the approbation of prejudice or fashion ; it is proper to inquire by what peculiarities of excellence Shakspeare has gained and kept the favour of his countrymen.

“ Nothing can please man^d ; and please long, but just representations of general nature. Particular manners can be known to few, and therefore few only can judge how nearly they are copied. The irregular combinations of fanciful invention may delight a while, by that novelty of which the common satiety of life sends us all in quest ; the pleasures of sudden wonder are soon exhausted, and the mind can only repose on the stability of truth.

“ Shakspeare is, above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature ; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world ; by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can

operate but upon small numbers ; or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions ; they are the genuine progeny of common humanity ; such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual, in those of Shakspeare it is commonly a species.

“ It is from this wide extension of design that so much instruction is derived. It is this which fills the plays of Shakspeare with practical axioms and domestic wisdom. It was said of Euripides, that every verse was a precept ; and it may be said of Shakspeare, that from his works may be collected a system of civil and economical prudence. Yet his real power is not shown in the splendour of particular passages, but by the progress of his fable and the tenour of his dialogue ; and he that tries to recommend him by select quotations will succeed like the pedant in Hierocles, who, when he offered his house to sale, carried a brick in his pocket as a specimen.

“ It will not easily be imagined how much Shakspeare excels in accommodating his sentiments to real life, but by comparing him with other authors. It was observed of the ancient schools of declamation, that the more diligently they were frequented, the more was the student disqualified

for the world, because he found nothing there which he should ever meet in any other place. The same remark may be applied to every stage but that of Shakspeare. The theatre, when it is under any other direction, is peopled by such characters as were never seen, conversing in a language which was never heard, upon topics which will never arise in the commerce of mankind. But the dialogue of this author is often so evidently determined by the incident which produces it, and is pursued with so much ease and simplicity, that it seems scarcely to claim the merit of fiction, but to have been gleaned by diligent selection out of common conversation and common occurrences.

“ Upon every other stage the universal agent is love, by whose power all good and evil is distributed, and every action quickened or retarded. To bring a lover, a lady, and a rival into the fable ; to entangle them in contradictory obligations, perplex them with oppositions of interest, and harass them with violence of desires, inconsistent with each other ; to make them meet in rapture, and part in agony ; to fill their mouths with hyperbolical joy and outrageous sorrow ; to distress them as nothing human ever was distressed ; to deliver them as nothing human ever was delivered, is the business of a modern dramatist. For this, probability is violated, life is misrepresented, and language is depraved. But love is only one of many passions ; and, as it has no great influence upon the sum of life.

it has little operation in the dramas of a poet who caught his ideas from the living world, and exhibited only what he saw before him. He knew that any other passion, as it was regular or exorbitant, was a cause of happiness or calamity.

“Characters thus ample and general were not easily discriminated and preserved, yet perhaps no poet ever kept his personages more distinct from each other. I will not say, with Pope, that every speech may be assigned to the proper speaker, because many speeches there are which have nothing characteristical; but, perhaps, though some may be equally adapted to every person, it will be difficult to find any that can be properly transferred from the present possessor to another claimant. The choice is right, when there is reason for choice.

“Other dramatists can only gain attention by hyperbolical or aggravated characters, by fabulous and unexampled excellence or depravity, as the writers of barbarous romances invigorated the reader by a giant and a dwarf; and he that should form his expectations of human affairs from the play, or from the tale, would be equally deceived. Shakspeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion; even where the agency is supernatural, the dialogue is level with life. Other writers disguise the

most natural passions and most frequent incidents, so that he who contemplates them in the book will not know them in the world: Shakspeare approximates the remote, and familiarizes the wonderful; the event which he represents will not happen, but, if it were possible, its effects would probably be such as he has assigned; and it may be said that he has not only shown human nature as it acts in real exigences, but as it would be found in trials to which it cannot be exposed.

“ This therefore is the praise of Shakspeare, that his drama is the mirror of life; that he who has mazed his imagination, in following the phantoms which other writers raise up before him, may here be cured of his delirious ecstasies, by reading human sentiments in human language; by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world, and a confessor predict the progress of the passions.

“ His adherence to general nature has exposed him to the censure of critics who form their judgments upon narrower principles. Dennis and Rymer think his Romans not sufficiently Roman; and Voltaire censures his kings as not completely royal. Dennis is offended that Menenius, a senator of Rome, should play the buffoon; and Voltaire perhaps thinks decency violated when the Danish usurper is represented as a drunkard. But Shakspeare always makes nature predominate over accident; and, if he preserves the essen-

tial character, is not very careful of distinctions superinduced and adventitious. His story requires Romans or kings, but he thinks only on men. He knew that Rome, like every other city, had men of all dispositions; and, wanting a buffoon, he went into the senate-house for that which the senate-house would certainly have afforded him. He was inclined to show an usurper and a murderer not only odious, but despicable; he therefore added drunkenness to his other qualities, knowing that kings love wine like other men, and that wine exerts its natural power upon kings. These are the petty cavils of petty minds! a poet overlooks the casual distinction of country and condition, as a painter, satisfied with the figure, neglects the drapery.

“ The censure which he has incurred by mixing comic and tragic scenes, as it extends to all his works, deserves more consideration. Let the fact be first stated, and then examined.

“ Shakspeare’s plays are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination; and expressing the course of the world, in which the loss of one is the gain of another; in which, at the same time, the reveller is hasting to his wine, and the mourner burying his friend; in which the

malignity of one is sometimes defeated by the frolic of another; and many mischiefs and many benefits are done and hindered without design.

“ Out of this chaos of mingled purposes and casualties, the ancient poets, according to the laws which custom had prescribed, selected, some the crimes of men, and some their absurdities; some the momentous vicissitudes of life, and some the lighter occurrences; some the terrors of distress, and some the gaieties of prosperity. Thus rose the two modes of imitation known by the name of *tragedy* and *comedy*,—compositions intended to promote different ends by contrary means, and considered as so little allied, that I do not recollect among the Greeks or Romans a single writer who attempted both.

“ Shakspeare has united the powers of exciting laughter and sorrow not only in one mind, but in one composition. Almost all his plays are divided between serious and ludicrous characters, and, in these successive evolutions of the design, sometimes produce seriousness and sorrow, and sometimes levity and laughter.

“ That this is a practice contrary to the rules of criticism will be readily allowed; but there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature. The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing. That the mingled drama may convey all the instruction of tragedy or comedy cannot be denied, because it includes both in its alternations of exhibition, and

approaches nearer than either to the appearance of life, by showing how great machinations and slender designs may promote or obviate one another, and the high and the low co-operate in the general system by unavoidable concatenation.

“ It is objected that by this change of scenes the passions are interrupted in their progression, and that the principal event, being not advanced by a due gradation of preparatory incidents, wants at last the power to move, which constitutes the perfection of dramatic poetry. This reasoning is so specious, that it is received as true even by those who in daily experience feel it to be false. The interchanges of mingled scenes seldom fail to produce the intended vicissitudes of passion. Fiction cannot move so much but that the attention may be easily transferred ; and though it must be allowed that pleasing melancholy may be sometimes interrupted by unwelcome levity, yet let it be considered likewise that melancholy is often not pleasing, and that the disturbance of one man may be the relief of another ; that different auditors have different habitudes ; and that, upon the whole, all pleasure consists in variety.

“ The players, who in their edition divided our author's works into comedies, histories, and tragedies, seem not to have distinguished the three kinds by any very exact or definite ideas.

“ An action which ended happily to the

principal persons, however serious or distressful through its intermediate incidents, in their opinion constituted a comedy. This idea of a comedy continued long amongst us, and plays were written, which, by changing the catastrophe, were tragedies to-day and comedies to-morrow.

“Tragedy was not in those times a poem of more general dignity or elevation than comedy; it required only a calamitous conclusion, with which the common criticism of that age was satisfied, whatever lighter pleasure it afforded in its progress.

“History was a series of actions, with no other than chronological succession, independent on each other, and without any tendency to introduce or regulate the conclusion. It is not always very nicely distinguished from tragedy. There is not much nearer approach to unity of action in the tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra than in the history of Richard the Second. But a history might be continued through many plays; as it had no plan, it had no limits.

“Through all these denominations of the drama, Shakspeare’s mode of composition is the same: and interchange of seriousness and merriment, by which the mind is softened at one time and exhilarated at another. But, whatever be his purpose, whether to gladden or depress, or to conduct the story, without vehemence or emotion, through tracts of easy and familiar dialogue, he never fails to attain his purpose; as

he commands us, we laugh or mourn, or sit silent with quiet expectation, in tranquillity without indifference.

“When Shakspeare’s plan is understood, most of the criticisms of Rymer and Voltaire vanish away. The play of Hamlet is opened, without impropriety, by two centinels; Iago bellows at Brabantio’s window, without injury to the scheme of the play, though in terms which a modern audience would not easily endure; the character of Polonius is seasonable and useful; and the Gravediggers themselves may be heard with applause.

“Shakspeare engaged in dramatic poetry with the world open before him; the rules of the ancients were yet known to few; the public judgment was unformed; he had no example of such fame as might force him upon imitation, nor critics of such authority as might restrain his extravagance: he therefore indulged his natural disposition, and his disposition, as Rymer has remarked, led him to comedy. In tragedy he often writes with great appearance of toil and study what is written at last with little felicity; but in his comic scenes he seems to produce without labour what no labour can improve. In tragedy he is always struggling after some occasion to be comic, but in comedy he seems to repose, or to luxuriate, as in a mode of thinking congenial to his nature. In his tragic scenes there is always something wanting,

but his comedy often surpasses expectation or desire. His comedy pleases by the thoughts and the language, and his tragedy for the greater part by incident and action. His tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy to be instinct.

“The force of his comic scenes has suffered little diminution from the changes made by a century and a half in manners or in words. As his personages act upon principles arising from genuine passion, very little modified by particular forms, their pleasures and vexations are communicable to all times and to all places; they are natural, and therefore durable; the adventitious peculiarities of personal habits are only superficial dyes, bright and pleasing for a little while, yet soon fading to a dim tinct, without any remains of former lustre: but the discrimination of true passion are the colours of nature; they pervade the whole mass, and can only perish with the body that exhibits them. The accidental compositions of heterogeneous modes are dissolved by the chance which combined them; but the uniform simplicity of primitive qualities neither admits increase, nor suffers decay. The sand heaped by one flood is scattered by another, but the rock always continues in its place. The stream of time, which is continually washing the dissoluble fabrics of other poets, passes without injury by the adamant of Shakspeare.

“If there be, what I believe there is, in every nation, a style which never becomes obsolete, a

certain mode of phraseology so consonant and congenial to the analogy and principles of its respective language as to remain settled and unaltered, this style is probably to be sought in the common intercourse of life, among those who speak only to be understood, without ambition of elegance. The polite are always catching modish innovations, and the learned depart from established forms of speech, in hope of finding or making better; those who wish for distinction forsake the vulgar, when the vulgar is right; but there is a conversation above grossness and below refinement, where propriety resides, and where this poet seems to have gathered his comic dialogue. He is therefore more agreeable to the ears of the present age than any other author equally remote, and among his other excellences deserves to be studied as one of the original masters of our language.

“ These observations are to be considered not as unexceptionably constant, but as containing general and predominant truth. Shakspeare’s familiar dialogue is affirmed to be smooth and clear, yet not wholly without ruggedness or difficulty; as a country may be eminently fruitful, though it has spots unfit for cultivation: his characters are praised as natural, though their sentiments are sometimes forced, and their actions improbable; as the earth upon the whole is spherical, though its surface is varied with protuberances and cavities. .

“Shakspeare with his excellences has likewise faults, and faults sufficient to obscure and overwhelm any other merit. I shall show them in the proportion in which they appear to me, without envious malignity or superstitious veneration. No question can be more innocently discussed than a dead poet's pretensions to renown ; and little regard is due to that bigotry which sets candour higher than truth.

“His first defect is that to which may be imputed most of the evil in books or in men. He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose. From his writings indeed a system of social duty may be selected, for he that thinks reasonably must think morally ; but his precepts and axioms drop casually from him ; he makes no just distribution of good or evil, nor is always careful to show in the virtuous a disapprobation of the wicked ; he carries his persons indifferently through right and wrong, and at the close dismisses them without further care, and leaves their examples to operate by chance. This fault the barbarity of his age cannot extenuate ; for it is always a writer's duty to make the world better, and justice is a virtue independent on time or place.

“The plots are often so loosely formed that a very slight consideration may improve them, and so carelessly pursued that he seems not always

fully to comprehend his own design. He omits opportunities of instructing or delighting which the train of his story seems to force upon him, and apparently rejects those exhibitions which would be more affecting for the sake of those which are more easy.

"It may be observed that in many of his plays the latter part is evidently neglected. When he found himself near the end of his work, and in view of his reward, he shortened the labour to snatch the profit. He therefore remits his efforts where he should most vigorously exert them, and his catastrophe is improbably produced or imperfectly represented.

"He had no regard to distinction of time or place, but gives to one age or nation, without scruple, the customs, institutions, and opinions of another, at the expense not only of likelihood, but of possibility. These faults Pope has endeavoured, with more zeal than judgment, to transfer to his imagined interpolators. We need not wonder to find Hector quoting Aristotle when we see the loves of Theseus and Hippolyta combined with the Gothic mythology of fairies. Shakspeare, indeed, was not the only violator of chronology, for in the same age Sydney, who wanted not the advantages of learning, has, in his 'Arcadia,' confounded the pastoral with the feudal times; the days of innocence, quiet, and security with those of turbulence, violence, and adventure.

"In his comic scenes he is seldom very suc-

cessful when he engages his characters in reciprocations of smartness and contests of sarcasm ; their jests are commonly gross, and their pleasantries licentious ; neither his gentlemen nor his ladies have much delicacy, nor are sufficiently distinguished from his clowns by any appearance of refined manners. Whether he represented the real conversation of his time is not easy to determine. The reign of Elizabeth is commonly supposed to have been a time of stateliness, formality, and reserve ; yet, perhaps, the relaxations of that severity were not very elegant. There must, however, have been always some modes of gaiety preferable to others, and a writer ought to choose the best.

“ In tragedy his performance seems constantly to be worse as his labour is more. The effusions of passion, which exigence forces out, are for the most part striking and energetic ; but whenever he solicits his invention, or strains his faculties, the offspring of his throes is tumour, meanness, tediousness, and obscurity.

“ In narration he affects a disproportionate pomp of diction, and a wearisome train of circumlocution, and tells the incident imperfectly in many words, which might have been more plainly delivered in few. Narration in dramatic poetry is naturally tedious, as it is unanimated and inactive, and obstructs the progress of the action ; it should therefore always be rapid and enlivened by frequent interruption. Shakspeare found it an

encumbrance, and, instead of lightening it by brevity, endeavoured to recomment it by dignity and splendour.

“ His declamations or set speeches are commonly cold and weak, for his power was the power of Nature ; when he endeavoured, like other tragic writers, to catch opportunities of amplification, and, instead of inquiring what the occasion demanded, to show how much his stores of knowledge could supply, he seldom escapes without the pity or resentment of his reader.

“ It is incident to him to be now and then entangled with an unwieldy sentiment, which he cannot well express and will not reject ; he struggles with it a while, and, if it continues stubborn, comprises it in words such as occur, and leaves it to be disentangled and evolved by those who have more leisure to bestow upon it.

“ Not that always where the language is intricate the thought is subtle, or the image always great where the line is bulky ; the equality of words to things is very often neglected, and trivial sentiments and vulgar ideas disappoint the attention, to which they are recommended by sonorous epithets and swelling figures.

“ But the admirers of this great poet have most reason to complain when he approaches nearest to his highest excellence, and seems fully resolved to sink them in dejection and mollify them with tender emotions by the fall of greatness, the

danger of innocence, or the crosses of love. What he does best he soon ceases to do. He is not long soft and pathetic without some idle conceit or contemptible equivocation. He no sooner begins to move than he counteracts himself, and terror and pity, as they are rising in the mind, are checked and blasted by sudden frigidity.

“A quibble is to Shakspeare what luminous vapours are to the traveller; he follows it at all adventures; it is sure to lead him out of his way, and sure to engulf him in the mire. It has some malignant power over his mind, and its fascinations are irresistible. Whatever be the dignity or profundity of his disquisition, whether he be enlarging knowledge or exalting affection, whether he be amusing attention with incidents or enchain- ing it in suspense, let but a quibble spring up before him, and he leaves his work unfinished. A quibble is the golden apple for which he will always turn aside from his career, or stoop from his elevation. A quibble, poor and barren as it is, gave him such delight, that he was content to purchase it by the sacrifice of reason, propriety, and truth. A quibble was to him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it.

“It will be thought strange that, in enumerating the defects of this writer, I have not yet mentioned his neglect of the unities; his violation of those laws which have been instituted and

established by the joint authority of poets and of critics.

“ For his other deviations from the art of writing I resign him to critical justice, without making any other demand in his favour than that which must be indulged to all human excellence—that his virtues be rated with his failings; but from the censure which this irregularity may bring upon him, I shall, with due reverence to that learning which I must oppose, adventure to try how I can defend him.

“ His histories, being neither tragedies nor comedies, are not subject to any of their laws; nothing more is necessary to all the praise which they expect than that the changes of action be so prepared as to be understood, that the incidents be various and affecting, and the characters consistent, natural, and distinct. No other unity is intended, and therefore none is to be sought.

“ In his other works he has well enough preserved the unity of action. He has not, indeed, an intrigue regularly perplexed and regularly unravelled; he does not endeavour to hide his design, only to discover it, for this is seldom the order of real events, and Shakspeare is the poet of nature: but his plan has commonly what Aristotle requires—a beginning, a middle, and an end; one event is concatenated with another, and the conclusion follows by easy consequence. There are, perhaps, some incidents that might be spared, as in other

poets there is much talk that only fills up time upon the stage; but the general system makes gradual advances, and the end of the play is the end of expectation.

“To the unities of time and place he has shown no regard; and perhaps a nearer view of the principles on which they stand will diminish their value, and withdraw from them the veneration which, from the time of Corneille, they have very generally received, by discovering that they have given more trouble to the poet than pleasure to the auditor.

“The necessity of observing the unities of time and place arises from the supposed necessity of making the drama credible. The critics hold it impossible that an action of months or years can be possibly believed to pass in three hours; or that the spectator can suppose himself to sit in the theatre, while ambassadors go and return between distant kings, while armies are levied, and towns besieged, while an exile wanders and returns, or till he whom they saw courting his mistress shall lament the untimely fall of his son. The mind revolts from evident falsehood, and fiction loses its force when it departs from the resemblance of reality.

“From the narrow limitation of time necessarily arises the contraction of place. The spectator who knows that he saw the first act at Alexandria, cannot suppose that he sees the next at Rome, at a distance to which not the dragons

of Medea could in so short a time have transported him ; he knows with certainty that he has not changed his place ; and he knows that place cannot change itself ; that what was a house cannot become a plain ; that what was Thebes can never be Persepolis.

“ Such is the triumphant language with which a critic exults over the misery of an irregular poet, and exults commonly without resistance or reply. It is time therefore to tell him, by the authority of Shakspeare, that he assumes, as an unquestionable principle, a position which, while his breath is forming it into words, his understanding pronounces to be false. It is false that any representation is mistaken for reality ; that any dramatic fable in its materiality was ever credible, or for a single moment was ever credited.

“ The objection arising from the impossibility of passing the first hour at Alexandria and the next at Rome, supposes that when the play opens the spectator really imagines himself at Alexandria, and believes that his walk to the theatre has been a voyage to Egypt, and that he lives in the days of Antony and Cleopatra. Surely he that imagines this may imagine more. He that can take the stage at one time for the palace of the Ptolemies may take it in half an hour for the promontory of Actium. Delusion, if delusion be admitted, has no certain limitation ; if the spectator can be once persuaded that his old acquaintance are Alexander and Cæsar, that a

room illuminated with candles is the plain of Pharsalia, or the banks of Granicus, he is in a state of elevation above the reach of reason or of truth, and from the heights of empyrean poetry may despise the circumscriptions of terrestrial nature. There is no reason why a mind thus wandering in ecstasy should count the clock, or why an hour should not be a century in that calenture of the brains that can make the stage a field.

“The truth is, that the spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players. * They come to hear a certain number of lines recited with just gesture and elegant modulation. The lines relate to some action, and an action must be in some place ; but the different actions that complete a story may be in places very remote from each other ; and where is the absurdity of allowing that space to represent first Athens and then Sicily, which was always known to be neither Sicily nor Athens, but a modern theatre ?

“By supposition, as place is introduced, time may be extended ; the time required by the fable elapses for the most part between the acts ; for, of so much of the action as is represented, the real and poetical duration is the same. If in the first act preparations for war against Mithridates are represented to be made in Rome, the event of the war may, without absurdity, be

represented in the catastrophe as happening in Pontus ; we know that there is neither war, nor preparation for war ; we know that we are neither in Rome nor Pontus ; that neither Mithridates nor Lucullus are before us. The drama exhibits successive imaginations of successive actions, and why may not the second imitation represent an action that happened years after the first, if it be so connected with it that nothing but time can be supposed to intervene ? Time is, of all modes of existence, most obsequious to the imagination ; a lapse of years is as easily conceived as a passage of hours. In contemplation we easily contract the time of real actions, and therefore willingly permit it to be contracted when we only see their imitation.

“ It will be asked how the drama moves, if it is not credited. It is credited with all the credit due to a drama. It is credited, whenever it moves, as a just picture of a real original ; as representing to the auditor what he would himself feel if he were to do or suffer what is there feigned to be suffered or to be done. The reflection that strikes the heart is not that the evils before us are real evils, but that they are evils to which we ourselves may be exposed. If there be any fallacy, it is not that we fancy the players, but that we fancy ourselves, unhappy for a moment ; but we rather lament the possibility than suppose the presence of misery, as a mother weeps over her babe when she remembers that

death may take it from her. The delight of tragedy proceeds from our consciousness of fiction ; if we thought murders and treasons real, they would please no more.

“ Imitations produce pain or pleasure not because they are mistaken for realities, but because they bring realities to mind. When the imagination is recreated by a painted landscape, the trees are not supposed capable to give us shade, or the fountains coolness ; but we consider how we should be pleased with such fountains playing beside us, and such woods waving over us. We are agitated in reading the history of Henry the Fifth, yet no man takes his book for the field of Agincourt. A dramatic exhibition is a book recited with concomitants that increase or diminish its effect. Familiar comedy is often more powerful on the theatre than in the page ; imperial tragedy is always less. The humour of Petruchio may be heightened by grimace ; but what voice or what gesture can hope to add dignity or force to the soliloquy of Cato ?

“ A play read affects the mind like a play acted. It is therefore evident that the action is not supposed to be real ; and it follows that between the acts a longer or shorter time may be allowed to pass, and that no more account of space or duration is to be taken by the auditor of a drama than by the reader of a narrative, before whom may pass in an hour the life of a hero or the revolutions of an empire.

“ Whether Shakspeare knew the unities, and rejected them by design, or deviated from them by happy ignorance, it is, I think, impossible to decide and useless to inquire. We may reasonably suppose that when he rose to notice he did not want the counsels and admonitions of scholars and critics, and that he at last deliberately persisted in a practice which he might have begun by chance. As nothing is essential to the fable but unity of action, and as the unities of time and place arise evidently from false assumptions, and, by circumscribing the extent of the drama, lessen its variety, I cannot think it much to be lamented that they were not known by him, or not observed ; nor, if such another poet could arise, should I very vehemently reproach him that his first act passed at Venice and his next in Cyprus. Such violations of rules merely positive become the comprehensive genius of Shakspeare, and such censures are suitable to the minute and slender criticism of Voltaire : —

‘ Non usque adeo permiscuit imis
Longus summa dies, ut non, si voce Metelli
Serventur leges, malint a Cæsare tolli.’

“ Yet, when I speak thus slightly of dramatic rules, I cannot but recollect how much wit and learning may be produced against me ; before such authorities I am afraid to stand, not that I think the present question one of those that are to be decided by mere authority, but because it is to be suspected that these precepts have not

been so easily received but for better reasons than I have yet been able to find. The result of my inquiries, in which it would be ludicrous to boast of impartiality, is, that the unities of time and place are not essential to a just drama ; that, though they may sometimes conduce to pleasure, they are always to be sacrificed to the nobler beauties of variety and instruction ; and that a play, written with nice observation of critical rules, is to be contemplated as an elaborate curiosity, as the product of superfluous and ostentatious art, by which is shown rather what is possible than what is necessary.

“ He that, without diminution of any other excellence, shall preserve all the unities unbroken, deserves the like applause with the architect who shall display all the orders of architecture in a citadel without any deduction from its strength : but the principal beauty of a citadel is to exclude the enemy ; and the greatest graces of a play are to copy nature and instruct life.

“ Perhaps what I have here not dogmatically but deliberately written may recall the principles of the drama to a new examination. I am almost frightened at my own temerity ; and, when I estimate the fame and the strength of those that maintain the contrary opinion, am ready to sink down in reverential silence ; as Æneas withdrew from the defence of Troy, when he saw Neptune shaking the wall, and Juno heading the besiegers.

“Those whom my arguments cannot persuade to give their approbation to the judgment of Shakspeare, will easily, if they consider the condition of his life, make some allowance for his ignorance.

“Every man’s performances, to be rightly estimated, must be compared with the state of the age in which he lived, and with his own particular opportunities ; and though to a reader a book be not worse or better for the circumstances of the author, yet, as there is always a silent reference of human works to human abilities, and as the inquiry how far man may extend his designs, or how high he may rate his native force, is of far greater dignity than in what rank we shall place any particular performance, curiosity is always busy to discover the instruments as well as to survey the workmanship, to know how much is to be ascribed to original powers, and how much to casual and adventitious help. The palaces of Peru and Mexico were certainly mean and incommodious habitations, if compared to the houses of European monarchs ; yet who could forbear to view them with astonishment who remembered that they were built without the use of iron ?

“The English nation, in the time of Shakspeare, was yet struggling to emerge from barbarity. The philology of Italy had been transplanted hither in the reign of Henry VIII. ; and the learned languages had been successfully cul-

tivated by Lilly, Linacre, and More ; by Pole, Cheke, and Gardiner ; and afterwards by Smith, Clerk, Haddon, and Ascham. Greek was now taught to boys in the principal schools ; and those who united elegance with learning, read, with great diligence, the Italian and Spanish poets. But literature was yet confined to professed scholars, or to men and women of high rank. The public was gross and dark ; and to be able to read and write was an accomplishment still valued for its rarity.

“ Nations, like individuals, have their infancy. A people newly awakened to literary curiosity, being yet unacquainted with the true state of things, knows not how to judge of that which is proposed as its resemblance. Whatever is remote from common appearances is always welcome to vulgar as to childish credulity ; and of a country unenlightened by learning the whole people is the vulgar. The study of those who then aspired to plebeian learning was laid out upon adventures, giants, dragons, and enchantments. ‘ The Death of Arthur ’ was the favourite volume.

“ The mind which has feasted on the luxurious wonders of fiction has no taste of the insipidity of truth. A play which imitated only the common occurrences of the world would, upon the admirers of ‘ Palmerin ’ and ‘ Guy of Warwick,’ have made little impression ; he that wrote for such an audience was under the necessity of

looking round for strange events and fabulous transactions, and that incredibility, by which maturer knowledge is offended, was the chief recommendation of writings to unskilful curiosity.

“ Our author’s plots are generally borrowed from novels ; and it is reasonable to suppose that he chose the most popular, such as were read by many, and related by more ; for his audience could not have followed him through the intricacies of the drama had they not held the thread of the story in their hands.

“ The stories which we now find only in remoter authors were in his time accessible and familiar. The fable of *As You Like It*, which is supposed to be copied from Chaucer’s ‘ *Gamelyn*,’ was a little pamphlet of those times ; and old Mr. Cibber remembered the tale of Hamlet in plain English prose, which the critics have now to seek in *Saxo Grammaticus*.

“ His English histories he took from English chronicles and English ballads ; and as the ancient writers were made known to his countrymen by versions, they supplied him with new subjects ; he dilated some of Plutarch’s ‘ *Lives* ’ into plays, when they had been translated by North.

“ His plots, whether historical or fabulous, are always crowded with incidents, by which the attention of a rude people was more easily caught than by sentiment or argumentation ; and such is the power of the marvellous, even over those, who

despise it, that every man finds his mind more strongly seized by the tragedies of Shakspeare than of any other writer ; others please us by particular speeches, but he always makes us anxious for the event, and has, perhaps, excelled all but Homer in securing the first purpose of a writer, by exciting restless and unquenchable curiosity, and compelling him that reads his work to read it through.

“ The shows and bustle with which his plays abound have the same original. As knowledge advances, pleasure passes from the eye to the ear, but returns, as it declines, from the ear to the eye. Those to whom our author's labours were exhibited had more skill in pomps or processions than in poetical language, and perhaps wanted some visible and discriminated events, as comments on the dialogue. He knew how he should most please ; and whether his practice is more agreeable to nature, or whether his example has prejudiced the nation, we still find that on our stage something must be done as well as said, and inactive declamation is very coldly heard, however musical or elegant, passionate or sublime.

“ Voltaire expresses his wonder that our author's extravagances are endured by a nation which has seen the tragedy of ‘ Cato.’ Let him be answered, that Addison speaks the language of poets, and Shakspeare of men. We find in ‘ Cato ’ innumerable beauties which enamour us

of its author, but we see nothing that acquaints us with human sentiments or human actions : we place it with the fairest and the noblest progeny which judgment propagates by conjunction with learning ; but Othello is the vigorous and vivacious offspring of observation impregnated by genius. ' Cato ' affords a splendid exhibition of artificial and fictitious manners, and delivers just and noble sentiments in diction easy, elevated, and harmonious ; but its hopes and fears communicate no vibration to the heart ; the composition refers us only to the writer ; we pronounce the name of Cato, but we think on Addison.

" The work of a correct and regular writer is a garden accurately formed and diligently planted, varied with shades, and scented with flowers : the composition of Shakspeare is a forest, in which oaks extend their branches, and pines tower in the air, interspersed sometimes with weeds and brambles, and sometimes giving shelter to myrtles and to roses ; filling the eye with awful pomp, and gratifying the mind with endless diversity. Other poets display cabinets of precious rarities, minutely finished, wrought into shape, and polished into brightness. Shakspeare opens a mine which contains gold and diamonds in inexhaustable plenty, though clouded by incrustations, debased by impurities, and mingled with a mass of meaner minerals.

" It has been much disputed whether Shakspeare owed his excellence to his own native force

or whether he had the common helps of scholastic education, the precepts of critical science, and the examples of ancient authors.

“There has always prevailed a tradition that Shakspeare wanted learning, that he had no regular education, nor much skill in the dead languages. Jonson, his friend, affirms that *he had small Latin and less Greek*; who, besides that he had no imaginable temptation to falsehood, wrote at a time when the character and acquisitions of Shakspeare were known to multitudes. His evidence ought therefore to decide the controversy, unless some testimony of equal force could be opposed.

“Some have imagined that they have discovered deep learning in imitations of old writers; but the examples which I have known urged were drawn from books translated in his time, or were such easy coincidences of thought as will happen to all who consider the same subjects, or such remarks on life or axioms of morality as float in conversation, and are transmitted through the world in proverbial sentences.

“I have found it remarked that, in this important sentence, ‘Go before, I’ll follow,’ we read a translation of ‘*I prae, sequar.*’ I have been told that when Caliban, after a pleasing dream, says, ‘I cried to sleep again,’ the author imitates Anacreon, who had, like every other man, the same wish on the same occasion.

“There are a few passages which may pass for

imitations, but so few, that the exception only confirms the rule ; he obtains them from accidental quotations, or by oral communication ; and, as he used what he had, would have used more if he had obtained it.

“ The Comedy of Errors is confessedly taken from the ‘ Menæchmi ’ of Plautus ; from the only play of Plautus which was then in English. What can be more probable than that he who copied that would have copied more, but that those which were not translated were inaccessible ?

“ Whether he knew the modern languages is uncertain. That his plays have some French scenes proves but little ; he might easily procure them to be written, and probably, even though he had known the language in the common degree, he could not have written it without assistance. In the story of Romeo and Juliet he is observed to have followed the English translation, where it deviates from the Italian ; but this, on the other part, proves nothing against his knowledge of the original. He was to copy, not what he knew himself, but what was known to his audience.

“ It is most likely that he had learned Latin sufficiently to make him acquainted with construction, but that he never advanced to an easy perusal of the Roman authors. Concerning his skill in modern languages I can find no sufficient ground of determination ; but as no imitations of French or Italian authors have been discovered, though the Italian poetry was then high in esteem, I am

inclined to believe that he read little more than English, and chose for his fables only such tales as he found translated.

“ That much knowledge is scattered over his works is very justly observed by Pope, but it is often such knowledge as books did not supply. He that will understand Shakspeare must not be content to study him in the closet, he must look for his meaning sometimes among the sports of the field, and sometimes among the manufactures of the shop.

“ There is however proof enough that he was a very diligent reader ; nor was our language then so indigent of books but that he might very liberally indulge his curiosity without excursion into foreign literature. Many of the Roman authors were translated, and some of the Greek ; the Reformation had filled the kingdom with theological learning ; most of the topics of human disquisition had found English writers ; and poetry had been cultivated, not only with diligence, but success. This was a stock of knowledge sufficient for a mind so capable of appropriating and improving it.

“ But the greater part of his excellence was the product of his own genius. He found the English stage in a state of the utmost rudeness ; no essays either in tragedy or comedy had appeared, from which it could be discovered to what degree of delight either one or other might be carried. Neither character nor dialogue were yet

understood. Shakspeare may be truly said to have introduced them both amongst us, and in some of his happier scenes to have carried them both to the utmost height.

“ By what gradations of improvement he proceeded is not easily known ; for the chronology of his works is yet unsettled. Rowe is of opinion that ‘ perhaps we are not to look for his beginning, like those of other writers, in his least perfect works ; art had so little, and nature so large a share in what he did, that, for aught I know,’ says he, ‘ the performances of his youth, as they were the most vigorous, were the best.’ But the power of nature is only the power of using to any certain purpose the materials which diligence procures, or opportunity supplies. Nature gives no man knowledge, and, when images are collected by study and experience, can only assist in combining or applying them. Shakspeare, however favoured by nature, could impart only what he had learned ; and as he must increase his ideas, like other mortals, by gradual acquisition, he, like them, grew wiser as he grew older, could display life better as he knew it more, and instruct with more efficacy as he was himself more amply instructed.

“ There is a vigilance of observation and accuracy of distinction which books and precepts cannot confer ; from this almost all original and native excellence proceeds. Shakspeare must have looked upon mankind with perspicacity, in

the highest degree curious and attentive. Other writers borrow their characters from preceding writers, and diversify them only by the accidental appendages of present manners; the dress is a little varied, but the body is the same. Our author had both matter and form to provide; for, except the characters of Chaucer, to whom I think he is not much indebted, there were no writers in English, and perhaps not many in other modern languages, which showed life in its native colours.

“ The contest about the original benevolence or malignity of man had not yet commenced. Speculation had not yet attempted to analyse the mind, to trace the passions to their sources, to unfold the seminal principles of vice and virtue, or sound the depths of the heart for the motives of action. All those inquiries which, from that time that human nature became the fashionable study, have been made, sometimes with nice discernment, but often with idle subtlety, were yet unattempted. The tales with which the infancy of learning was satisfied exhibited only the superficial appearances of action, related the events, but omitted the causes, and were formed for such as delighted in wonders rather than in truth. Mankind was not then to be studied in the closet; he that would know the world was under the necessity of gleaning his own remarks, by mingling as he could in its business and amusements.

“Boyle congratulated himself upon his high birth, because it favoured his curiosity, by facilitating his access. Shakspeare had no such advantage; he came to London a needy adventurer, and lived for a time by very mean employments. Many works of genius and learning have been performed in states of life that appear very little favourable to thought or to inquiry; so many, that he who considers them is inclined to think that he sees enterprise and perseverance predominating over all external agency, and bidding help and hinderance vanish before them. The genius of Shakspeare was not to be depressed by the weight of poverty, nor limited by the narrow conversation to which men in want are inevitably condemned; the encumbrances of his fortune were shaken from his mind, ‘as dew-drops from a lion’s mane.’

“Though he had so many difficulties to encounter, and so little assistance to surmount them, he has been able to maintain an exact knowledge of many modes of life and many casts of native dispositions; to vary them with great multiplicity; to mark them by nice distinctions; and to show them in full view by proper combinations. In this part of his performances he had none to imitate, but has himself been imitated by all succeeding writers; and it may be doubted whether from all his successors more maxims of theoretical knowledge, or more rules of practical prudence, can

be collected, than he alone has given to his country.

“ Nor was his attention confined to the actions of men ; he was an exact surveyor of the inanimate world ; his descriptions have always some peculiarities, gathered by contemplating things as they really exist. It may be observed that the oldest poets of many nations preserve their reputation, and that the following generations of wit, after a short celebrity, sink into oblivion. The first, whoever they be, must take their sentiments and descriptions immediately from knowledge ; the resemblance is therefore just, their descriptions are verified by every eye, and their sentiments acknowledged by every breast. Those whom their fame invites to the same studies copy partly them, and partly nature, till the books of one age gain such authority as to stand in the place of nature to another, and imitation, always deviating a little, becomes at last capricious and casual. Shakspeare, whether life or nature be his subject, shows plainly that he has seen with his own eyes ; he gives the image which he receives, not weakened or distorted by the intervention of any other mind ; the ignorant feel his representations to be just, and the learned see that they are complete.

“ Perhaps it would not be easy to find any author, except Homer, who invented so much as Shakspeare, who so much advanced the studies which he cultivated, or effused so much novelty

upon his age or country. The form, the character, the language and the shows of the English drama are his. 'He seems,' says Dennis, 'to have been the very original of our English tragical harmony, that is, the harmony of blank verse, diversified often by dissyllable and trisyllable terminations. For the diversity distinguishes it from heroic harmony, and by bringing it nearer to common use makes it more proper to gain attention, and more fit for action and dialogue. Such verse we make when we are writing prose ; we make such verse in common conversation.'

"I know not whether this praise is rigorously just. The dissyllable termination, which the critic rightly appropriates to the drama, is to be found, though, I think, not in 'Gorboduc,' which is confessedly before our author, yet in 'Hieronymo,' of which the date is not certain, but which there is reason to believe at least as old as his earlier plays. This, however, is certain, that he is the first who taught either tragedy or comedy to please, there being no theatrical piece of any older writer, of which the name is known, except to antiquaries and collectors of books, which are sought because they are scarce, and would not have been scarce had they been much esteemed.

"To him we must ascribe the praise, unless Spenser may divide it with him, of having first discovered to how much smoothness and harmony the English language could be softened. He has

speeches, perhaps sometimes scenes, which have all the delicacy of Rowe, without his effeminacy. He endeavours indeed commonly to strike by the force and vigour of his dialogue, but he never executes his purpose better than when he tries to soothe by softness.

“ Yet it must be at last confessed that, as we owe everything to him, he owes something to us ; that if much of his praise is paid by perception and judgment, much is likewise given by custom and veneration. We fix our eyes upon his graces, and turn them from his deformities, and endure in him what we should in another loathe and despise. If we endured without praising, respect for the father of our drama might excuse us ; but I have seen, in the book of some modern critic, a collection of anomalies, which show that he has corrupted language by every mode of depravation, but which his admirer has accumulated as a monument of honour.

“ He has scenes of undoubted and perpetual excellence, but perhaps not one play which, if it were now exhibited as the work of a contemporary writer, would be heard to the conclusion. I am indeed far from thinking that his works were wrought to his own ideas of perfection ; when they were such as would satisfy the audience, they satisfied the writer. It is seldom that authors, though more studious of fame than Shakspeare, rise much above the standard of their own age ; to add a little to what is best will always be sufficient for present praise, and

those who find themselves exalted into fame are willing to credit their encomiasts, and to spare the labour of contending with themselves."

It was observed by Warburton, in 1747, that the fit criticism for Shakspeare was not such "as may be raised mechanically on the rules which Dacier, Rapin, and Bossu have collected from antiquity ; and of which such kind of writers as Rymer, Gildon, Dennis, and Oldmixon, have only gathered and chewed the husks." But he goes on to infer that "crude and superficial judgments on books and things" had taken the place of the older mechanical criticism ; and that there was "a deluge of the worst sort of critical jargon — *that which looks most like sense.*" The rules of art, as they were called, having been rejected as inapplicable to Shakspeare, a swarm of writers arose who considered that he was to be judged without the application of any general principles at all. They held that he wrote without a system ; that the absence of this system produced his excellences and his faults ; that his absurdities were as striking as his beauties ; that he was the most careless and hasty of writers ; and that therefore it was the business of all grave and discreet critics to warn the unenlightened multitude against his blunders, his contradictions, his violations of sense and decency. This was the critical *school of individual judgment*, which has lasted for more than a century amongst us ; and which, to our minds, is a far more corrupting thing than the pedantries

of all the Gildons and Dennis's who have eat paper and drunk ink. Before the publication of Johnson's preface (which being of a higher order of composition than what had previously been produced upon Shakspeare, *seemed* to establish fixed rules for opinion), the impertinencies which were poured out by the feeblest minds upon Shakspeare's merits and demerits surpass all ordinary belief. Mrs. Charlotte Lennox, in whose "Shakespear Illustrated" Johnson himself is reputed to have had some hand, is an average specimen of the insolence of that critical jargon "which looks most like sense." This work was published in 1753. A passage or two will show the sort of style in which this high-priestess of criticism delivered her oracles:—

Romeo and Juliet.—"Shakespear makes Romeo, in the midst of his affliction for the death of his wife, and while the horrible design of killing himself was forming in his mind, give a ludicrous detail of the miserable furniture of a poor apothecary's shop; a description, however beautiful in itself, is here so ill-timed and so inconsistent with the condition and circumstances of the speaker, that we cannot help being shocked at the absurdity."

Cymbeline.—"It would be an endless task to take notice of all the absurdities in the plot, and unnatural manners in the characters, of this play. The whole conduct of the play is absurd and ridiculous to the last degree; and with

all the liberties Shakespear has taken with time, place, and action, the story, as he has managed it, is more improbable than a fairy tale."

The Winter's Tale. — "It has been mentioned, as a great praise to Shakespear, that the old paltry story of 'Dorastus and Fawnia' served him for A Winter's Tale; but if we compare the conduct of the incidents in the play with the paltry story on which it is founded, we shall find the original much less absurd and ridiculous. . . . The novel has nothing in it half so low and improbable as this contrivance of the statue; and, indeed, wherever Shakespear has altered or invented, his Winter's Tale is greatly inferior to the old paltry story that furnished him with the subject of it."

Hamlet. — "The violation of poetical justice is not the only fault that arises from the death of Hamlet; the revenging his father's murder is the sole end of all his designs, and the great business of the play; and the noble and fixed resolution of Hamlet to accomplish it makes up the most shining part of his character; yet this great end is delayed till after Hamlet is mortally wounded. He stabs the king immediately upon the information of his treachery to himself. Thus his revenge becomes interested, and he seems to punish his uncle rather for his own death than the murder of the king his father."

Richard II. — "This play affords several other instances in which Shakespear's inattention to the

history is plainly proved; and is therefore the less pardonable, as the subject of it is not one entire action, wrought up with a variety of beautiful incidents, which at once delight and instruct the mind, but a dramatic narration of historical facts, and a successive series of actions and events, which are only interesting as they are true, and only pleasing as they are gracefully told."

Henry VIII.—"The fate of this Queen, or that of Cardinal Wolsey, each singly afforded a subject for tragedy. Shakespear, by blending them in the same piece, has destroyed the unity of his fable; divided our attention between them; and, by adding many other unconnected incidents, all foreign to his design, has given us an irregular historical drama, instead of a finished tragedy."

Much Ado about Nothing.—"This fable, absurd and ridiculous as it is, was drawn from the foregoing story, 'Genevra,' in Ariosto's 'Orlando Furioso,'—a fiction which, as it is managed by the epic poet, is neither improbable nor unnatural; but by Shakespear mangled and defaced, full of inconsistencies, contradictions, and blunders. The defaming a lady, by means of her servant personating her at her chamber-window, is the subject pursued by both. Shakespear, by changing the persons, altering some of the circumstances, and inventing others, has made the whole an improbable contrivance; borrowed just enough to show his poverty of invention, and added enough to prove his want of judgment."

Nothing can be a greater proof of the advance of *some* critical knowledge amongst us than the shuddering with which all persons of decent information now regard such utter trash. Mrs. Lennox was evidently a very small-minded person attempting to form a judgment upon a very high subject. But it was not only the small minds which uttered such babble in the last century. Samuel Johnson himself, in some of his critical opinions upon individual plays, is not very far above the good lady whom he patronised. What shall we think of the prosaic approbation of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*?—"Wild and fantastical as this play is, all the parts in their various modes are well written." What of his praise of *Romeo and Juliet*?—"His comic scenes are happily wrought, but his pathetic strains are always polluted with some unexpected depravations." What of the imputed omissions in *As You Like It*?—"By hastening to the end of this work Shakspeare suppressed the dialogue between the usurper and the hermit, and lost an opportunity of exhibiting a moral lesson in which he might have found matter worthy of his highest powers." What of the pompous seeing about *Macbeth*?—"It has no nice discriminations of character. The danger of ambition is well described. The passions are directed to the true end. Lady Macbeth is merely detested; and though the courage of Macbeth preserves some esteem, yet

very reader rejoices at his fall." What, lastly, shall we say to the bow-wow about Cymbeline? — "To remark the folly of the fiction, the absurdity of the conduct, the confusion of the names and manners of different times, and the impossibility of the events in any system of life, were to waste criticism upon unresisting imbecility—upon faults too evident for detection, and too gross for aggravation." All that we can in truth say of these startling things is this—that this learned, sensible, sometimes profound, and really great man, having trampled upon the unities and other tests of poetical merit, the fashion of Dryden's age, but not of his own, is perpetually groping about in the mists of his private judgment, now pursuing a glimmering of light, now involved in outer darkness. This system of criticism upon Shakspeare was rotten to the foundation. It was based upon an extension and a misapplication of Ben Jonson's dogmatic assertion—"He wanted art." The art of Shakspeare was not revealed to the critics of the last century. Let us hear one to whom the principles of this art were revealed:—"It is a painful truth, that not only individuals, but even whole nations, are oftentimes so enslaved to the habits of their education and immediate circumstances, as not to judge disinterestedly even on those subjects the very pleasure arising from which consists in its disinterestedness, namely, on subjects of taste and polite literature. Instead of deciding con-

cerning their own modes and customs by any rule of reason, nothing appears rational, becoming, or beautiful to them but what coincides with the peculiarities of their education. In this narrow circle individuals may attain to exquisite discrimination, as the French critics have done in their own literature; but a true critic can no more be such, without placing himself on some central point, from which he may command the whole,—that is, some general rule, which, founded in reason, or the faculties common to all men, must therefore apply to each,—than an astronomer can explain the movements of the solar system without taking his stand in the sun.”* Samuel Johnson proposes to inquire, in the preface before us, “by what peculiarities of excellence Shakspeare has gained and kept the favour of his countrymen.” He answers the question at considerable length, by displaying what he holds to be the great peculiarity of his excellence:—“Shakspeare is, above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life. . . . This, therefore, is the praise of Shakspeare—that his drama is the mirror of life.” Such is the leading idea of the critic. He sees nothing higher in Shakspeare than an exhibition of the *real*. “He who has mazed his imagination in following the phantoms which other writers

* Coleridge's “Literary Remains,” vol. ii. p. 63.

raise up before him may here be cured of his delirious ecstasies, by reading human sentiments in human language; by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world, and a confessor predict the progress of the passions." When Johnson is unable to trace this actual picture of life in Shakspeare, when he perceives any deviations from the regular "transactions of the world," or the due "progress of the passions," then he is bewildered; and he generally ends in blaming his author. The characteristic excellence, he says, of the tragedy of Hamlet is "variety." According to his notion that in all Shakspeare's dramas we find "an interchange of seriousness and merriment, by which the mind is softened at one time and exhilarated at another," he holds, that "the pretended madness of Hamlet causes much mirth." But, in the conduct of the plot, the business of life and the course of the passions do not proceed with the regularity which he desires:—"Of the feigned madness of Hamlet there appears no adequate cause. . . . Hamlet is, through the whole piece, rather an instrument than an agent. After he has by the stratagem of the play convicted the king, he makes no attempt to punish him. . . . The catastrophe is not very happily produced." Where is the mistake in all this? It is in taking a very limited view of the object and scope of Art. "It is its object and aim to bring within the

circle of our senses, perceptions, and emotions, everything which has existence in the mind of man. Art should realize in us the well-known saying, *Nihil humani a me alienum puto*. Its appointed aim is, to awake and give vitality to all slumbering feelings, affections, and passions ; to fill and expand the heart ; and to make man, whether developed or undeveloped, feel in every fibre of his being *all* that human nature can endure, experience, and bring forth in her innermost and most secret recesses—*all* that has power to move and arouse the heart of man in its profoundest depths, manifold capabilities, and various phases ; to garner up for our enjoyment whatever, in the exercise of thought and imagination, the mind discovers of high and intrinsic merit, the grandeur of the lofty, the eternal, and the true, and present it to our feeling and contemplation. In like manner, to make pain and sorrow, and even vice and wrong, become clear to us ; to bring the heart into immediate acquaintance with the awful and the terrible, as well as with the joyous and pleasurable ; and lastly, to lead the fancy to hover gently, dreamily, on the wing of imagination, and entice her to revel in the seductive witchery of its voluptuous emotion and contemplation. Art should employ this manifold richness of its subject-matter to supply on the one hand the deficiencies of our actual experience of external life, and on the other hand to excite in us those passions which

shall cause the actual events of life to move us more deeply, and awaken our susceptibility for receiving impressions of all kinds." *

This is something higher than Johnson's notion of Shakspeare's art—higher as that notion was than the mechanical criticism of the age which preceded him. But the inconsistencies into which the critic is betrayed show the narrowness and weakness of his foundations. The drama of Shakspeare is "a mirror of life;" and yet, according to the critic, it is the great sin of Shakspeare that he is perpetually violating "poetical justice." Thus Johnson says in the preface, "He makes no just distribution of good or evil, nor is always careful to show in the virtuous a disapprobation of the wicked; he carries his persons indifferently through right and wrong, and at the close dismisses them without further care, and leaves their examples to operate by chance." Johnson could not have avoided seeing that, if Shakspeare had not carried his persons "indifferently through right and wrong," he would not have exhibited "the real state of sublunary nature." But there was something much higher that Shakspeare would not then have done. Had he gone upon the principle of teaching an impracticable and therefore an unnatural theory of rewards and punishments in human

* We quote this from a very able article in the "British and Foreign Review," on Hegel's "Æsthetics." The passage is Hegel's.

affairs, if he had not intended that "his precepts and axioms" *should* "drop casually from him," he would have lost his supereminent power of gradually raising the mind into a comprehension of what belongs to the spiritual part of our nature; of exciting a deep sympathy with strong emotion and lofty passion; of producing an expansion of the heart, which embraces all the manifestations of human goodness and human sorrow; and, what is more, which penetrates into the abysses of guilt and degradation, and shows that there is no true peace, and no real resting-place, for what separates us from our fellow-men and from our God. This is not to be effected by didactic precepts *not* dropped casually; by false representations of the course of worldly affairs and the workings of man's secret heart. The mind comprehends the *whole* truth, when it is elevated by the art of the poet into a fit state for its comprehension. The *whole* moral purpose is then evolved, through a series of deductions in the mind of him who is thus moved. This is the highest logic, because it is based upon the broadest premises. Rymer sneers at Shakspeare when he says that the moral of Othello is, that maidens of quality should not run away with blackamoors. The sarcasm only tells upon those who demand any literal moral in a high work of art.

Because Johnson only saw in Shakspeare's dramas "a mirror of life," he prefers his comedy to his tragedy. "His tragedy seems to be skill, his

comedy to be instinct." When the poet is working with grander materials than belong to the familiar scenes of life, however natural and universal, the critic does not see that the region of literal things is necessarily abandoned — that skill must be more manifest in its effects. We are then in a world of higher reality than every-day reality. "In tragedy he often writes with great appearance of toil and study what is written at last with little felicity." This now strikes the most superficial student of Shakspeare as monstrous. We open "Irene," and we understand it. "He omits opportunities of instructing or delighting which the train of his story seems to force upon him, and apparently rejects those exhibitions which would be more affecting for the sake of those which are more easy." It is a great privilege of the art of Shakspeare, that in his most tragical scenes he never takes us out of the region of pleasurable emotions. It was his higher art, as compared with the lower art of Otway. He does reject "those exhibitions which would be more affecting," but not "for the sake of those which are more easy." Let any one try which is the more easy, "to touch a soul to the quick, to lay upon fear as much as it can bear, to wean and weary a life till it is ready to drop," as Charles Lamb describes the tragic art of Webster; or to make a Desdemona, amidst the indignities which are heaped upon her, and the fears which subdue her soul, move tranquilly in an atmo-

sphere of poetical beauty, thinking of the maid that

“ had a song of — willow ;
An old thing 'twas, but it express'd her fortune,
And she died singing it.”

It is a rude conception which Johnson has of Shakspeare's art, when he says of the play of Hamlet, “ The scenes are interchangeably diversified with merriment and solemnity. . . . The pretended madness of Hamlet causes much mirth; the mournful distraction of Ophelia fills the heart with tenderness; and every personage produces the effect intended.” True. But it was no intended effect of the madness of Hamlet to cause “ much mirth.” Every word that Hamlet utters has something in it which sounds the depths of our intellectual being, because every word is consistent with his own character, which, of all poetical creations, sends us most to search into the mysteries of our own individual natures. This, if we understand it aright, is *poetry*. But Johnson says, “ Voltaire expresses his wonder that our author's extravagances are endured by a nation which has seen the tragedy of ‘ Cato.’ Let him be answered, that Addison speaks the language of poets, and Shakspeare of men. We find in ‘ Cato ’ innumerable beauties which enamour us of its author, but we see nothing that acquaints us with human sentiments or human actions ; we place it with the fairest and noblest progeny which judgment propagates by conjunc-

tion with learning ; but Othello is the vigorous and vivacious offspring of observation, impregnated with genius." If Addison speaks "the language of poets," properly so called, "Cato" is poetry. If Shakspeare speaks the language of men, as distinct from the language of poets, Othello is *not* poetry. It needs no further argument to show that the critic has a false theory of the poetical art. He has here narrowed the question to an absurdity.

We may observe, from what Johnson says of "the minute and slender criticism of Voltaire," that the English critics fancied that, doing Shakspeare ample justice themselves, they were called upon to defend him from the mistaken criticisms of a foreign school. Every Englishman, from the period of Johnson, who has fancied himself absolved from the guilt of not admiring and understanding Shakspeare has taken up a stone to cast at Voltaire. 'Those who speak of Voltaire as an ignorant and tasteless calumniator of Shakspeare forget that his hostility was based upon a system of art which he conceived, and rightly so, was opposed to the system of Shakspeare. He had been bred up in the school of Corneille and Racine, the glories of his countrymen ; and it is really a remarkable proof of the vigour of his mind that he tolerated so much as he did in Shakspeare, and admired so much ; in this respect going farther perhaps than many of our own countrymen of no mean

reputation, such as Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke in 1730. In his "Discourse on Tragedy," prefixed to "Brutus," and addressed to Bolingbroke in that year, he says, "Not being able, my lord, to risk upon the French stage verses without rhyme, such as are the usage of Italy and of England, I have at least desired to transport to our scene certain beauties of yours. It is true, and I avow it, that the English theatre is very faulty. *I have heard from your mouth that you have not a good tragedy.* But in compensation you have some admirable scenes in these very monstrous pieces. Until the present time almost all the tragic authors of your nation have wanted that purity, that regular conduct, those *bienséances* of action and style, that elegance, and all those refinements of art, which have established the reputation of the French theatre since the great Corneille. But the most irregular of your pieces have one grand merit—it is that of *action*." In the same letter we have his opinion of Shakspeare, which is certainly not that of a cold critic, but of one who admired even where he could not approve, and blamed as we had been accustomed to blame:—"With what pleasure have I seen in London your tragedy of Julius Cæsar, which for a hundred and fifty years has been the delight of your nation! I assuredly do not pretend to approve the barbarous irregularities with which it abounds. It is only astonishing that one finds not more of them in a work composed in

an age of ignorance, by a man who even knew not Latin, and who had no master but his own genius. But in the midst of so many gross faults, with what ravishment have I seen Brutus," &c. All this is perfectly intelligible, and demands no harsher censure than we have a right to apply to Dryden, who says nearly as strong things, and writes most of his own tragedies in the spirit of a devoted worshipper of the French school. In 1761, some thirty years after his letter to Bolingbroke, Voltaire writes "An Essay on the English Theatre," in which he expresses the wonder, which Johnson notices, that the nation which has "Cato" can endure Shakspeare. In this essay he gives a long analysis of Hamlet, in which, without attempting to penetrate at all into the real idea of that drama, he gives such an account of the plot as may exaggerate what he regards as its absurdities. He then says, "We cannot have a more forcible example of the difference of taste among nations. Let us, after this, speak of the rules of Aristotle, and the three unities, and the *bienséances*, and the necessity of never leaving the scene empty, and that no person should go out or come in without a sensible reason. Let us talk, after this, of the artful arrangement of the plot and its natural development; of the expressions being simple and noble; of making princes speak with the decency which they always have, or ought to have; of never violating the rules of language.

It is clear that a whole nation may be enchanted without giving oneself such trouble." No one can be more consistent than Voltaire in the expression of his opinions. It is not the individual judgment of the man betraying him into a doubtful or varying tone, but his uniform theory of the poetical art, which directs all his censure of Shakspeare; and which therefore makes his admiration, such as it is, of more value than the vague homage of those who, despising, or affecting to despise, Voltaire's system, have embraced no system of their own, and thus infallibly come to be more dogmatical, more supercilious, in their abuse, and more creeping in their praise, than the most slavish disciple of a school wholly opposed to Shakspeare, but consecrated by time, by high example, and by national opinion. The worst things which Voltaire has said of Shakspeare are conceived in this spirit, and therefore ought not in truth to offend Shakspeare's warmest admirers. "He had a genius full of power and fruitfulness, of the natural and the sublime"—this is the praise. The dispraise is linked to it:—"Without the least spark of good taste, and without the slightest knowledge of rules." We may dissent from this, but it is not fair to quarrel with it. He then goes on:—"I will say a hazardous thing, but true, that the merit of this author has ruined the English theatre. There are so many fine scenes, so many grand and terrible passages spread through

his monstrous farces which they call tragedies, that his pieces have always been represented with extreme success."* We smile at the man's power of ridicule when he travesties a plot of Shakspeare, as in the dissertation prefixed to "Semiramis." But his object is so manifest—that of the elevation of his own theory of art—that he cannot outrage us. For what is his conclusion? That Shakspeare would have been a perfect poet if he had lived in the time of Addison.†

The famous "Letter to the Academy," in 1776, was the crowning effort of Voltaire's hostility to Shakspeare. In that year was announced a complete translation of Shakspeare; and several of the plays were published as a commencement of the undertaking. France, according to Grimm, was in a ferment.‡ The announcement of this translation appears to have enraged Voltaire. It said that Shakspeare was the creator of the sublime art of the theatre, which received from his hands existence and perfection; and, what was personally offensive, it added that Shakspeare was unknown in France, or, rather, disfigured. Voltaire tells the Academy that *he* was the first who made Shakspeare known in France, by the translation of some of his passages; that he had translated, too, the Julius Cæsar. But he is

* *Lettres Philosophiques*. Lettre 18.

† *Dictionnaire Philosophique*.

‡ *Correspondance*, 3^me partie, tome 1^{re}.

indignant that the new translators would sacrifice France to England, in paying no homage to the great French dramatists, whose pieces are acted throughout Europe. He notices, then, the four plays which they have translated ; and calls upon them, of course in his tone of exaggeration and ridicule, to render faithfully certain passages which they have slurred over. But Voltaire avows the support which he receives from the English themselves in his condemnation of what he holds to be the absurdities of Shakspeare, quoting from Marmontel in this matter : — “ The English have learned to correct and abridge Shakspeare. Garrick has banished from his scene the Gravediggers in Hamlet, and has omitted nearly all the fifth act.” Voltaire then adds, — “ The translator agrees not with this truth ; he takes the part of the gravediggers ; he would preserve them as a respectable monument of an unique genius.” The critic then gives a scene of “ *Bajazet*,” contrasting it with the opening scene of Romeo and Juliet. “ It is for you,” he says to the Academicians, “ to decide which method we ought to follow—that of Shakspeare, the god of tragedy, or of Racine.” In a similar way he contrasts a passage in Corneille and Lear : — “ Let the Academicians judge if the nation which has produced ‘ *Iphigénie*’ and ‘ *Athalie*’ ought to abandon them, to behold men and women strangled upon the stage, street-porters, sorcerers, buffoons, and drunken priests—if our

court, so long renowned for its politeness and its taste, ought to be changed into an alehouse and a wine-shop." In this letter to the Academy Voltaire loses his temper and his candour. He is afraid to risk any admiration of Shakspeare. But this intolerance is more intelligible than the apologies of Shakspeare's defenders in England. We must confess that we have more sympathy with Voltaire's earnest attack upon Shakspeare than with Mrs. Montagu's maudlin defence. Take a specimen:—"Our author, by following minutely the chronicles of the times, has embarrassed his dramas with too great a number of persons and events. The hurly-burly of these plays recommended them to a rude, illiterate audience, who, as he says, loved a noise of targets. His poverty, and the low condition of the stage (which at that time was not frequented by persons of rank), obliged him to this complaisance; and, unfortunately, he had not been tutored by any rules of art, or informed by acquaintance with just and regular dramas."* She gives a speech of Lear, and says, "Thus it is that Shakspeare redeems the nonsense, the indecorums, the irregularities of his plays." Again, in her criticism on Macbeth:—"Our author is too much addicted to the obscure bombast much affected by all sorts of writers in that age. . . . There are many bombast speeches in the tragedy of Macbeth, and these are the lawful prize of the critic." The exhibition

* Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakspeare.

of the fickle humour of the mob in Julius Cæsar is not to be "entirely condemned." "The quarrel between Brutus and Cassius does not, by any means, deserve the ridicule thrown upon it by the French critic : . . . but it rather retards than brings forward the catastrophe, and is useful only in setting Brutus in a good light." One more extract from Mrs. Montagu, and we have done : — "It has been demonstrated with great ingenuity and candour that he was destitute of learning : the age was rude and void of taste ; but what had a still more pernicious influence on his works was, that the court and the universities, the statesmen and scholars, affected a scientific jargon. An obscurity of expression was thought the veil of wisdom and knowledge ; and that mist, common to the morn and eve of literature, which in fact proves it is not at its high meridian, was affectedly thrown over the writings, and even the conversation of the learned, who often preferred images distorted or magnified, to a simple exposition of their thoughts. Shakspeare is never more worthy of the true critic's censure than in those instances in which he complies with this false pomp of manner. It was pardonable in a man of his rank not to be more polite and delicate than his contemporaries ; but we cannot so easily excuse such superiority of talents for stooping to any affectation." This half-patronising, half-vindicating tone is very well meant ; and we respect Mrs. Montagu for coming

forward to break a lance with the great European critic; but the very celebrity of Shakspeare's "fair warrior" is one of the proofs that there was no real school of criticism amongst us.

Apologies for Shakspeare, lamentations over his defects, explanations of the causes of them, rude age, unlettered audience, the poet himself working without knowledge, — all this the invariable language of the English critics, is eagerly laid hold of, not only to justify the hostility of Voltaire, but to perpetuate the reign of a system altogether opposed to the system of Shakspeare, up to the present hour. M. Villemain, in the new edition of his "Essay upon Shakspeare," published in 1839, gives us as much interjectional eulogy of our national poet as might satisfy the most eager appetite of those admirers who think such praise worth anything. The French critic, of nearly a century later than Voltaire, holds that Shakspeare has no other system than his genius. It is in this chaos that we must seek his splendour. His absurdities, his buffooneries, belong to the gross theatre of his period. In judging Shakspeare we must reject the mass of barbarism and false taste with which he is surcharged. But then, apart from any system, "quelle passion! quelle poésie! quelle éloquence!" "This rude and barbarous genius discovers an unknown delicacy in the development of his female characters." And why? "The taste which is so often missing in him is here supplied by a delicate instinct, which

makes him even anticipate what was wanting to the civilization of his time." The critic reposes somewhat on English authority :— " Mrs. Montagu has repelled the contempt of Voltaire by a judicious criticism of some defects of the French theatre, but she cannot palliate the enormous extravagances of the pieces of Shakspeare. Let us not forget, she says, that these pieces were played in a miserable inn before an unlettered audience, scarcely emerging out of barbarism." * But Mrs. Montagu is not alone in this. Others, as angry with Voltaire, as prodigal of their admiration of Shakspeare, quietly surrender what Voltaire really attacks, forgetting that his praises have been nearly as strong, and sometimes a little more judicious, than their own. Hear Martin Sherlock apostrophizing Shakspeare :—

" Always therefore study Nature.

" It is she who was thy book, O Shakspeare ; it is she who was thy study day and night ; it is she from whom thou hast drawn those beauties which are at once the glory and delight of thy nation. Thou wert the eldest son, the darling child, of nature ; and, like thy mother, enchanting, astonishing, sublime, graceful, thy variety is inexhaustible. Always original, always new, thou art the only prodigy which Nature has produced. Homer was the first of men, but thou art more than man. The reader who thinks this eulogium

* *Essai sur Shakspeare, Paris, 1839.*

extravagant is a stranger to my subject. To say that Shakspeare had the imagination of Dante, and the depth of Machiavel, would be a weak encomium : he had them, and more. To say that he possessed the terrible graces of Michael Angelo, and the amiable graces of Correggio, would be a weak encomium : he had them, and more. To the brilliancy of Voltaire he added the strength of Demosthenes ; and to the simplicity of La Fontaine, the majesty of Virgil. — But, say you, we have never seen such ‘ a being.’ You are in the right ; Nature made it, and broke the mould.”

This is the first page of “ A Fragment on Shakspeare ” (1786). The following is an extract from the last page : — “ The only view of Shakspeare was to make his fortune, and for that it was necessary to fill the playhouse. At the same time that he caused a duchess to enter the boxes, he would cause her servants to enter the pit. The people have always money ; to make them spend it, they must be diverted ; and Shakspeare forced his sublime genius to stoop to the gross taste of the populace, as Sylla jested with his soldiers.”

David Hume, the most popular historian of England, thus writes of Shakspeare : — “ Born in a rude age and educated in the lowest manner, without any instruction either from the world or from books.” The consequence of this national and individual ignorance was a necessary one : — “ A reasonable propriety of thought he cannot

for any time uphold." What right have we to abuse Voltaire, when we hear this from an English writer of the same period? We fully agree with Schlegel in this matter:—"That foreigners, and Frenchmen in particular, who frequently speak in the most strange language of antiquity and the middle ages, as if cannibalism had been first put an end to in Europe by Louis XIV., should entertain this opinion of Shakspeare, might be pardonable; but that Englishmen should adopt such a calumnation of that glorious epoch of their history, in which the foundation of their greatness was laid, is to me incomprehensible."* But it is not wholly incomprehensible. Schlegel has in part explained it:—"I have elsewhere examined into the pretensions of modern cultivation, as it is called, which looks down with such contempt on all preceding ages. I have shown that it is all little, superficial, and unsubstantial at bottom. The pride of what has been called the present maturity of human reason has come to a miserable end; and the structures erected by those pedagogues of the human race have fallen to pieces like the baby-houses of children." So far, of the critical contempt of the age of Shakspeare. Schlegel again, with equal truth, lays bare the real character of the same critical opinions of the poet himself:—"It was, generally speaking, the prevailing tendency of the time

* Lectures on Dramatic Literature, Black's Translation.

which preceded our own, a tendency displayed also in physical science, to consider what is possessed of life as a mere accumulation of dead parts ; to separate what exists only in connexion and cannot otherwise be conceived, instead of penetrating to the central point, and viewing all the parts as so many irradiations from it. Hence, nothing is so rare as a critic who can elevate himself to the contemplation of an extensive work of art. Shakspeare's compositions, from the very depth of purpose displayed in them, have been exposed to the misfortune of being misunderstood. Besides, this prosaical species of criticism applies always the poetical form to the details of execution ; but, in so far as the plan of the piece is concerned, it never looks for more than the logical connexion of causes and effects, or some partial and trivial moral by way of application ; and all that cannot be reconciled to this is declared a superfluous, or even a detrimental, addition. On these principles we must equally strike out most of the choral songs of the Greek tragedies, which also contribute nothing to the development of the action, but are merely an harmonious echo of the impression aimed at by the poet. In this they altogether mistake the rights of poetry and the nature of the romantic drama, which, for the very reason that it is and ought to be picturesque, requires richer accompaniments and contrasts for its main groups. In all art and poetry, but more especially in the

romantic, the fancy lays claim to be considered as an independent mental power governed according to its own laws."

The translation of Schlegel's work in 1815, in conjunction with the admirable lectures of Coleridge, gave a new direction amongst the thinking few to our national opinion of Shakspeare. Other critics of a higher school than our own race of commentators had preceded Schlegel in Germany; and it would be perhaps not too much to say that, as the reverent study of Shakspeare has principally formed their æsthetic school, so that æsthetic school has sent us back to the reverent study of Shakspeare. He lived in the hearts of the people, who knew nothing of the English critics. The learned, as they were called, understood him least. Let the lovers of truth rejoice that their despotism is over.

CHAPTER VI.

THE history of critical opinion upon Shakspeare, in England, has now brought us to what may be called the second race of commentators.

The English editors of Shakspeare have certainly brought to their task a great variety of qualities, from which combination we might expect some very felicitous results. They divide themselves into two schools, which, like all schools, have their subdivisions. Rowe, Pope, Theobald,

Hanmer, Johnson, belong to the school which did not seek any very exact acquaintance with our early literature, and which probably would have despised the exhibition, if not the reality, of antiquarian and bibliographical knowledge. A new school arose, whose acquaintance with what has been called black-letter literature was extensive enough to produce a decided revolution in Shakspearean commentary. Capell, Steevens, Malone, Reed, Douce, are the representatives of the later school. The first school contained the most brilliant men ; the second, the most painstaking commentators. The dullest of the first school, — a name hung up amongst the dunce by his rival editor, — poor, “ piddling Tibbald,” was unquestionably the best of the first race of editors. Rowe was indolent ; Pope, flashy ; Warburton, paradoxical ; Johnson, pedantic. Theobald brought his common sense to the task ; and has left us, we cannot avoid thinking, the best of all the conjectural emendations. Of the other school, the real learning, and sometimes sound judgment, of Capell, is buried in an obscurity of thought and style, — to say nothing of his comment being printed separately from his text, — which puts all ordinary reading for purposes of information at complete defiance. Of Steevens and Malone, they have had, more or less, the glory of having linked themselves to Shakspeare during the last half-century. Reed and Chalmers were mere supervisors and abridgers of what they did.

The edition of Capell was published in ten small octavo volumes, three years after that of Johnson—that is, in 1768. His preface is printed in what we call the variorum editions of Shakspeare, but Steevens has added to it this depreciating note:—"Dr. Johnson's opinion of this performance may be known from the following passage in Mr. Boswell's 'Life of Dr. Johnson:'—"If the man would have come to me, I would have endeavoured to endow his purpose with words, for, as it is, he doth gabble monstrously.'" Certainly "the man" does write a most extraordinary style; and it is impossible to do full justice to his edition, from the great bulk of the notes and various readings "being published in a separate form," with references to previous editors so obscure and perplexed that few would take the trouble to attempt to reach his meaning. Capell was a man of fortune; and he devoted a life to this labour, dying in the midst of it. Steevens never mentions him but to insult him; and amongst the heaps of the most trashy notes that encumber the variorum editions, raked together from the pamphlets of every dabbler in commentary, there is perhaps not one single-minded quotation from Capell. John Collins, the publisher of his posthumous *Notes and Various Readings*, brings a charge against Steevens which may account for this unrelenting hostility to a learned and amiable man labouring in a pursuit common to them both. He says that Capell's

edition "is made the groundwork of what is to pass for the genuine production of these combined editors" (Johnson and Steevens). This, he says, may be proved by a comparison of their first edition of 1773 with that of Johnson's of 1765, Capell's having been published during the interval. He then proceeds further in the charge:—"But the re-publication of their work, as it 'is revised and augmented,' makes further advances upon the same plan, abounding with fresh matter and accumulated evidence in proof of the industry with which the purloining trade has been pursued, and of the latitude to which it has been extended, in each of the above-mentioned particulars. For, differing as it does from its former self in numberless instances, in all of them it is still found to agree with that edition, which, we are gravely told in so many words by the apparent manager of the business, 'has not been examined beyond one play.'"

But there was another cause of the hostility of Steevens and his school of commentators. Farmer was their Coriphæus. Their souls were prostrate before the extent of his researches, in that species of literature which possesses this singular advantage for the cultivator, that, if he studies it in an original edition, of which only one or two copies are known to exist (the merit is gone if there is a baker's dozen known), he is immediately pronounced learned, judicious, laborious, acute. And this was Farmer's praise. He wrote "An Essay on

the Learning of Shakspeare," which has not one passage of solid criticism from the first page to the last, and from which, if the name and the works of Shakspeare were to perish, and one copy—an unique copy is the affectionate name for these things—could be miraculously preserved, the only inference from the book would be that William Shakspeare was a very obscure and ignorant man, whom some misjudging admirers had been desirous to exalt into an ephemeral reputation, and that Richard Farmer was a very distinguished and learned man, who had stripped the mask off the pretender. The first edition of Farmer's pamphlet appeared in 1767.

Capell, who had studied Shakspeare with far more accuracy than this mere pedant, who never produced any literary performance in his life except this arrogant pamphlet, held a contrary opinion to Farmer:—"It is our firm belief that Shakspeare was very well grounded, at least in Latin, at school. It appears, from the clearest evidence possible, that his father was a man of no little substance, and very well able to give him such education; which, perhaps, he might be inclined to carry further, by sending him to a university; but was prevented in this design (if he had it) by his son's early marriage, which, from monuments and other like evidence, it appears with no less certainty must have happened before he was seventeen, or very soon after: the displeasure of his father, which was the consequence

of this marriage, or else some excesses which he is said to have been guilty of, it is probable, drove him up to town ; where he engaged early in some of the theatres, and was honoured with the patronage of the Earl of Southampton : his Venus and Adonis is addressed to that Earl in a very pretty and modest dedication, in which he calls it ' the first heire of his invention ; ' and ushers it to the world with this singular motto :—

“ *Vilia miretur vulgus, mihi flavus Apollo
Pocula Castalia plena ministret aqua ;* ”

and the whole poem, as well as his Lucrece, which followed it soon after, together with his choice of those subjects, are plain marks of his acquaintance with some of the Latin classics, at least, at that time. The dissipation of youth, and, when that was over, the busy scene in which he instantly plunged himself, may very well be supposed to have hindered his making any great progress in them ; but that such a mind as his should quite lose the tincture of any knowledge it had once been imbued with cannot be imagined : accordingly we see that this school-learning (for it was no more) stuck with him to the last ; and it was the recordations, as we may call it, of that learning which produced the Latin that is in many of his plays, and most plentifully in those that are the most early : every several piece of it is aptly introduced, given to a proper character, and uttered upon some proper occasion ; and so well cemented, as it were, and joined to the passage it stands in,

as to deal conviction to the judicious, that the whole was wrought up together, and fetched from his own little store, upon the sudden, and without study.

“The other languages which he has sometimes made use of—that is, the Italian and French—are not of such difficult conquest that we should think them beyond his reach. An acquaintance with the first of them was a sort of fashion in his time. Surrey and the sonnet-writers set it on foot, and it was continued by Sidney and Spenser : all our poetry issued from that school ; and it would be wonderful indeed if he, whom we saw a little before putting himself with so much zeal under the banner of the Muses, should not have been tempted to taste at least of that fountain to which of all his other brethren there was such a continual resort : let us conclude, then, that he did taste of it ; but, happily for himself, and more happy for the world that enjoys him now, he did not find it to his relish, and threw away the cup. Metaphor apart, it is evident that he had some knowledge of the Italian—perhaps just as much as enabled him to read a novel or a poem, and to put some few fragments of it, with which his memory furnished him, into the mouth of a pedant or fine gentleman.

“How or when he acquired it we must be content to be ignorant ; but of the French language he was somewhat a greater master than of the two that have gone before ; yet, unless we except their

novelists, he does not appear to have had much acquaintance with any of their writers ; what he has given us of it is merely colloquial, flows with great ease from him, and is reasonably pure. Should it be said he had travelled for it, we know not who can confute us."

The principle of Capell's edition, as described by himself in the title-page, was to give the plays of Shakspeare as "set out by himself in quarto, or by the players, his fellows, in folio." His introduction consists of an analysis of the value of these various authorities ; and he discriminates very justly between those plays in quarto which "have much resemblance to those in the folio," and those which were "first drafts or else imperfect and stolen copies." His text is formed upon this discriminating principle, not attaching an equal value to all the original copies in quarto, or superseding the text of the folio by thrusting in passages out of the first drafts and imperfect copies. To say that his text is the result invariably of a sound judgment would be to say too much ; and indeed some of his emendations approach a little to the ridiculous. But we have no hesitation in saying that it is a better text, because approaching more nearly to the originals, than that of many of those who came after him, and went on mending and mending for half a century till the world was tired with the din of their tinkering. The race which succeeded him was corrupted by flattery. Take a specimen :—"Shakspeare's felicity has

been rendered complete in this age. His genius produced works that time could not destroy : but some of the lighter characters were become illegible ; these have been restored by critics whose learning and penetration have traced back the vestiges of superannuated opinions and customs. They are now no longer in danger of being effaced.* These critics had an accurate perception of part of their duty when they set out upon their work. The first labour of Steevens, which preceded the edition of Capell by two years, was to reprint in fac-simile "twenty of the plays of Shakspeare, being the whole number printed in quarto during his lifetime, or before the Restoration ; collated where there were different copies, and published from the originals." Most accurately did he execute this laborious duty. We have collated, directly, or by the employment of persons upon whose care we could implicitly rely, these re-impressions by Steevens ; and, with the exception, upon an average, of half a dozen of the minutest deviations in each play, we are as well contented with our copy for all purposes of utility as if we possessed the rarest edition of the most self-satisfied collector. The two great public libraries of England, the British Museum and the Bodleian, possess all the originals. The next progressive movement of Steevens was still in the same safe path. He became united with Johnson in the edition of 1773. In his advertisement he says,—“ The la-

* Mrs. Montagu :—Introduction.

bours of preceding editors have not left room for a boast that many valuable readings have been retrieved; though it may be fairly asserted that the text of Shakspeare is restored to the condition in which the author, or rather his first publishers, appear to have left it, such emendations as were absolutely necessary alone admitted." He defines what are absolutely necessary, such as a supply of particles when indispensable to the sense. He rejects with indignation all attempts to tamper with the text by introducing a syllable in aid of the metre. He declines suggestions of correspondents "that might have proved of great advantage to a more daring commentator." Upon such safe foundations was the edition of 1773 reared. In 1778 it was "revised and augmented," and in 1785 it was reprinted with additions by Isaac Reed, Steevens having declined the further care of the work. Steevens also in 1779 rendered an acceptable service to the students of our dramatic history, by the publication of "Six old plays, on which Shakspeare founded his Measure for Measure, Comedy of Errors, Taming the Shrew, King John, King Henry IV., King Henry V., and King Lear." In 1780 Malone appeared as an editor of Shakspeare. He came forward with "A Supplement" to the edition of 1778, in which he republished the poems of Shakspeare, and the seven doubtful plays which had been printed as his in the third and fourth folios. The encouragement which he had received induced

him, in 1790, when Steevens had retired from his editorial labours in connexion with the bookseller's edition, to publish a complete edition of his own, but which was still a variorum edition, "with the corrections and illustrations of various commentators." In this first appeared his "Dissertation on the Three Parts of Henry VI.," and his "Historical Account of the English Stage." Malone professes the same anxiety to adhere to the genuine text of Shakspeare as Steevens had professed before him ; but he opened a wide field for editorial licence, in his principle of making up a text out of the folio edition and the previous quartos ; and to add to the apparent value of his own labours, he exaggerated, as others have since done, the real value of these quartos :— "They *in general* are preferable to the exhibition of the same plays in the folio ; for this plain reason, because, instead of printing these plays from a manuscript, the editors of the folio, to save labour, or from some other motive, printed the greater part of them from the very copies which they represented as maimed and imperfect, and frequently from a late, instead of the earliest, edition ; in some instances with additions and alterations of their own." This is not an accurate statement of the question ; for the large additions to the folio copy when compared with the quartos, the careful emendations, and even the omissions, which are seldom without some sound apparent reason, could not have been the additions

and alterations of the editors of the folio, but must have been the result of the author's labours, perhaps during a series of years. We may with propriety in this place take a general view of the materials upon which a genuine text of Shakspeare must be founded.

"Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies, published according to the True Originall Copies," is the title of the first collection of our poet's plays, which appeared in a folio volume, in 1623. This volume is "printed by Isaac Iaggard and Ed. Blount;" but the Dedication bears the signatures of "John Heminge, Henry Condell." That Blount and Jaggard had become the proprietors of this edition, we learn from an entry in the Stationers' registers, under date November 8. 1623; in which they claim "Mr. William Shakespeere's Comedyes, Histories, and Tragedyes, soe many of the said copies as are not formerly entered to other men." These copies so claimed as not "formerly entered" are then recited. They are in number sixteen*; the whole volume con-

* Of the *eighteen* plays enumerated in pp. 226, 227. as first printed in the folio of 1623, as far as ascertained from any known edition, they claim *fifteen* — that is all, with the exception of "The Taming of the Shrew," "King John," and "Henry VI., Part I." But they also claim "The Third Part of Henry VI.," which had been previously printed, with very large differences, as "The Second Part of the Contention of the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster;" thus making *sixteen* as the number claimed as "not formerly entered."

sisting of thirty-six plays. The plays "formerly entered to other men" had, with some exceptions, been previously published, each separately; and some of these went on to several editions, at dates extending from 1597 to 1622. These are what are commonly spoken of as the quarto editions. Before we proceed to an examination of the value of these editions, it may be well to see the mode in which they were regarded, or professed to be regarded, by the editors of the folio of 1623.

John Heminge and Henry Condell were amongst the "principal actors" of the plays of Shakspeare, according to a list prefixed to their edition. In 1608 they were shareholders with Shakspeare in the Blackfriars Theatre. In his Will, in 1616, they stand upon equal terms with his eminent friend Burbage, in the following bequest:—"To my fellows, John Hemynge, Richard Burbage, and Henry Condell, twenty-six shillings eight-pence apiece, to buy them rings." In 1619, after the death of Shakspeare and Burbage, they were at the head of the remaining "fellows." They are entitled, therefore, to speak with authority, and to be regarded with deference, both from their intimate connexion with Shakspeare, and the responsible position which they held in the company of actors of which his plays had probably become the most valuable possession. In their Dedication to the Earl of Pembroke and the Earl of Montgomery,

they allude to the favour with which these noblemen regarded these productions (which, in the dedicatory language, they call "trifles"), and "their author, living." They further say, "We have but collected them, and done an office to the dead, to procure his orphans guardians, without ambition either of self-profit or fame; only to keep the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive as was our Shakespeare." In their address "To the great variety of readers," the words which they use are still more remarkable:—"It had been a thing, we confess, worthy to have been wished, that the author himself had lived to have set forth and overseen his own writings. But since it hath been ordained otherwise, and he, by death, departed from that right, we pray you do not envy his friends the office of their care and pain to have collected and published them; and so to have published them, as where, before, you were abused with divers stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious impostors that exposed them,—even those are now offered to your view cured, and perfect of their limbs, and all the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he conceived them; who, as he was a happy imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together; and what he thought, he uttered with that easiness that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers."

That the friends, fellows, and editors of Shakspeare were held to perform an acceptable service to the world by this publication we may judge, however imperfectly, from some of the verses prefixed to the edition. Ben Jonson's celebrated poem, "To the Memory of my beloved the Author, Mr. William Shakspeare: and what he hath left us," follows the preface, and it concludes with these lines: —

"Shine forth, thou star of poets, and with rage,
Or influence, chide, or cheer the drooping stage;
Which, since thy flight from hence, hath mourn'd
like night,
And despairs day, *but for thy volume's light.*"

Another poem in the same volume, by Leonard Digges, is in the same tone: —

"Shakspeare, at length *thy pious fellows give*
The world thy works; thy works by which outlive
Thy tomb thy name must. When that stone is rent,
And time dissolves thy Stratford monument,
Here we alive shall view thee still. *This look,*
When brass and marble fade, shall make thee look
Fresh to all ages."

We cannot doubt that the publication of this volume was hailed with delight by all readers of taste and judgment; and that, previous to the publication of the second edition, nine years after, hundreds of the countrymen of Shakspeare, as well as the young Milton, had become familiar with "the leaves" of that "unvalued book." For, if the edition of 1623 had no other claims upon the gratitude of every Englishman, it had secured

from that destruction, entire or partial, which would probably have been their fate if they had remained in manuscript, some of the noblest monuments of Shakspeare's genius. The poet had been dead seven years when this edition was printed. Some of the plays which it preserved, through the medium of the press, had been written a considerable period before his death. We have not a single manuscript line in existence, written, or supposed to be written, by Shakspeare. If, from any notions of exclusive advantage as the managers of a company, Heminge and Condell had not printed this edition of Shakspeare,—if the publication had been suspended for ten, or at most for fifteen years, till the civil wars broke out, and the predominance of the puritanical spirit had shut up the theatres,—the probability is that all Shakspeare's manuscripts would have perished. What then should we have lost, which will now remain when “brass and marble fade!” We will give the list of those plays which, as far as any edition is known, were printed for the first time in the folio of 1623:—

COMEDIES.

The Tempest.
The Two Gentlemen of Verona.
Measure for Measure.
The Comedy of Errors.
As You Like It.
The Taming of the Shrew.
All's Well that Ends Well.
Twelfth Night.
The Winter's Tale.

HISTORIES.

King John.
Henry VIII.

Henry VI., Part I.

TRAGEDIES.

Coriolanus.

Timon of Athens.

Julius Cæsar.

Macbeth.

Antony and Cleopatra.

Cymbeline.

But the enumeration of these eighteen plays, which were printed for the first time in the folio of 1623, by no means represents the entire amount of the obligation to the editors of that collection. They have themselves spoken of "divers stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious impostors that exposed them;" and they add, "even those are now offered to your view cured, and perfect of their limbs." Without here entering into the question whether particular copies of the plays published before the folio of 1623 were "stolen and surreptitious," we shall place before our readers the titles of those plays, which, in their original form, appear from some cause or other imperfect, —either "maimed or deformed," or produced immaturity:—

The Merry Wives of Windsor.

Henry V.

The First Part of the Contention of The Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster. (Corresponding with Hen. VI., Part II.)

The Second Part of the Contention, &c. (Corresponding with Henry VI., Part III.)

Had these plays not been preserved in the folio of 1623, the previously existing copies

would have furnished us a very imperfect notion of the state in which the poet finally left them.

Putting, therefore, the eighteen plays first printed in the folio with the four plays there first printed in a perfect shape, we must come to the conclusion that, out of the thirty-six plays which that edition contains, the text of twenty-two must absolutely be founded on the text of Heminge and Condell. There is only one play which common consent has ascribed wholly, or in part, to Shakspeare, namely "Pericles," which is not included in the edition of 1623.

We have been somewhat minute in this enumeration, to meet an opinion amongst readers of Shakspeare, who have not very critically examined the principles upon which a text is founded, that there is a broad and pretty equal question between the advocates for the text of the first folio, and the advocates for the text of the plays which had appeared separately in quarto previous to the publication of that edition. The real question, as it has been seen, is one of much narrower limits, upon the face of it. There are only fourteen plays originally published separately to which the important question of differences of readings can at all apply. In comparing these separate plays amongst themselves—one edition of the same play with another edition—the matter becomes more complex; and there is greater scope given to the industry of those who collate, and to the ingenuity of those who build riddles upon the collation. Some would

even collate every single copy of the same edition. Be it so. All this implies homage; and does no harm, if we connect it with higher things. We subjoin a list of the first editions of the quarto plays, with the dates of their original publication, and the date of the entry of each at Stationers' Hall; mentioning, however, that there had been previous editions of "Romeo and Juliet," and of "Hamlet," essentially very different, not only in the matter common to each, but in their extent. We add, with an object which we shall presently explain, the names of the publishers:—

Name of Play published in Quarto.	Date of First Edition.	Date of Entry at Stationers' Hall.	Publishers' Names.
Richard II. - -	1597	1597	Andrew Wise.
Richard III. - -	1597	1597	William Wise.
Romeo and Juliet, "corrected and augmented."	1599	—	Cuthbert Burby.
Love's Labour's Lost .	1598	—	Cuthbert Burby.
Henry IV., Part I. -	1598	1597	Andrew Wise.
Henry IV., Part II. -	1600	1600	Andrew Wise and Wm. Aspley.
Merchant of Venice -	1600	1598	Thomas Heyes.
Midsummer Night's Dream.	1600	1600	Thomas Fisher.
Much ado about Nothing.	1600	1600	A. Wise and Wm. Aspley.
Titus Andronicus .	1600	1593	Edward White.
(An edition is stated to have appeared in 1594.)			
Hamlet, "enlarged to almost as much again as it was."	1604	—	N. Landure.
Lear - - -	1608	1607	Nat. Butter.
Troilus and Cressida -	1609	1608	R. Bonian and H. Whalley.
Othello - - -	1622	1621	Thomas Walkley.

The editors of the first folio, as we have seen, use in their preface the following words:—
“Before you were abused with *divers* stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious impostors that exposed them.” It is necessary that we should examine to which of the plays published before the folio this strong charge applies. It has been thought to invoke a sweeping condemnation of *all* the previous editions;—but this is not so: it applies only to “*divers* stolen and surreptitious copies.” We know not if there were *other* “stolen and surreptitious copies,” besides those which may be included in the quartos preserved to us. There may have been meagre and worthless copies, which, as far as we know, may have perished. We believe that the condemnation does not in any degree apply to the first *nine* of the plays included in the list which we have just given. Upon the quarto editions of those plays, the text of the folio, with slight alterations, is unquestionably founded. Verbal corrections, and in one or two cases additions and omissions, are found in the folio;—but they are only such as an author, having his printed works before him during at least sixteen years, would naturally make. The most considerable additions are to “The Second Part of Henry IV.”—These nine plays do not furnish the slightest internal evidence of appearing to be printed from an imperfect copy. Further, in seven out of the nine cases, the proprietary

interest of the original publishers of these plays never lapses. Andrew and William Wise, in connexion with William Aspley, are the original publishers of "Richard II.," "Richard III.," the two Parts of "Henry IV.," and "Much Ado about Nothing;" they, and their assign or partner, Matthew Law, print many editions of the historical plays, from 1597 to 1622: and then Aspley becomes a proprietor of the folio, to which his name is affixed as one of the publishers. Cuthbert Burby is the original publisher of the "augmented" "Romeo and Juliet," and of "Love's Labour's Lost;" in 1607 he assigns his interest to John Smethwick: they publish several editions of "Romeo and Juliet," from 1599 to 1609; and Smethwick finally becomes a proprietor also of the folio of 1623. With regard to "The Merchant of Venice," and "A Midsummer Night's Dream," we cannot trace the proprietary interest of their original publishers down to the publication of the folio, by any entries in the books of the Stationers' Company.* Of each of these plays there were also editions in 1600, but none after;—one of each bearing the name of a publisher, and the other of a printer, J. Roberts. "Titus Andronicus" has also the distinction of being printed with remarkable accu-

* The books of the Stationers' Company were examined by Steevens, and he transcribed and published all the entries which could bear upon the works of Shakspeare; but he made no deductions from the facts.

racy in the quarto editions ; which editions with slight alterations, though with one Scene added, form the text of the folio.

The reader will have observed, as a remarkable circumstance, that the ten plays which we have thus described as authentic copies were printed during the short period of four years. In 1598 Francis Meres notices, as examples of Shakspeare's excellence in comedy and tragedy, certain plays then existing. Of the plays printed in 1600 his list includes all that we have exhibited, with the exception of "Much Ado about Nothing ;" and it contains only four other plays not then printed, namely, "The Two Gentlemen of Verona." "The Comedy of Errors," "Love's Labour Won" (supposed to be "All's Well that Ends Well"), and "King John." It will be observed, also, that of these ten plays five were printed in one year, 1600. We think that it may be shown with tolerable certainty that none of Shakspeare's plays were subsequently printed before his death, except piratically ; or with the intention of giving a "true and perfect copy" instead of a piratical one ; or under some peculiar circumstances which are naturally involved in mystery. Of those so printed separately the number is only six. We must notice them in detail.

In 1600 appeared "*The Chronicle History of Henry V.*," &c. This edition contains about half the number of lines of that in the folio copy. The additions consist of all the choruses, the whole of the first scene of Act I., and some

of the most spirited speeches. The entire play is indeed recast; and yet although it is perfectly evident, from the passage in the chorus to the fifth act referring to

“ the general of our gracious queen

(As in good time he may) from Ireland coming,”

that the choruses were introduced in 1599, they appear not in the first edition of 1600, nor in the second of 1602, nor in the third of 1608. There can be no question, we think, that the original play of “ Henry V.,” as exhibited in these quartos, was a hasty sketch, afterwards worked up into the perfect form in which we now find it; that the piratical publishers had obtained a copy of that sketch,—but that they were effectually prevented obtaining a copy with the additions and amendments. We think it by no means improbable that the piratical publication of this play in its imperfect state—as perfect as could be obtained by the publishers without the consent of the author, or proprietors—was one of the consequences of a change in the policy upon which Shakspeare’s theatre was conducted. We have seen that, from 1597 to 1600, ten plays were published in a perfect state, differing very slightly from the copies published after his death by the authority of his friends and “ fellows.” Previous to the publication of “ Henry V.,” in 1600, no edition that can be considered piratical had appeared. In 1602 came out another imperfect, and probably mutilated copy—“ *The*

Merry Wives of Windsor." The first edition of Arthur Johnson, in 1602, and a subsequent edition of 1619, present only the sketch of that play as we now have it from the folio. The improvements and additions in this case are as numerous and important as in the "Henry V." But they were never suffered to be published till they appeared in the folio. "*Hamlet*" differs from the two preceding instances, from a genuine copy having been brought out immediately after the appearance of what was most probably a piratical one. The unique first edition in the possession of the Duke of Devonshire (reprinted in 1825) is, like "Henry V." and "The Merry Wives of Windsor," a sketch as compared with the finished play. It was published by N. L. (Nicholas Ling) and John Trundell, in 1603; but in 1604 an edition was published by N. Landure, "newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much againe as it was, according to the true and perfect copie." This is the play, with very slight variations, as we now possess it; and this edition was reprinted four times in Shakspeare's life, having become the property of John Smethwicke, who, as we have mentioned, became one of the publishers of the folio. "*Lear*" was published by Nathaniel Butter in 1608, and in that year he produced three editions. No future edition appears till that of the folio, while "*Hamlet*," and "*Romeo and Juliet*," are constantly reprinted. Butter's edition of "*Lear*" is however a correct one. He must have had a

genuine copy. "*Troilus and Cressida*," published by R. Bonian and H. Whalley, in 1609, is a genuine copy.

We have now gone through the list of all the quarto plays that appeared before Shakspeare's death. "*Othello*," the only other quarto, was not printed till 1622. It is a genuine copy; and its publication may have had some influence in determining the proprietors of Shakspeare's authentic plays, whether printed or in manuscript, to form and publish the collection of 1623.

It is impossible, we think, to imagine that this decided system of publication of Shakspeare's plays up to 1600, and of non-publication after 1600, could have been the result of accident. Malone assigns as a reason for this remarkable circumstance, that, "if we suppose him to have written for the stage during a period of twenty years, those pieces which were produced in the latter part of that period were less likely to pass through the press in his lifetime, as the curiosity of the public had not been so long engaged by them as by his early compositions." This reasoning is singularly erroneous. Not a single play, with the exception of the two Parts of "*The Contention*," was printed before 1597, and in 1600 ten had been printed, in addition to the two Parts of "*The Contention*." According to Malone, the curiosity of the public had not begun to operate till 1597; and it ceased to operate after 1600, when the reputation of the author

was becoming greater and greater, and he was making the highest efforts to place it above all competition. The demand for new editions of those plays which had been published before 1600 was very remarkable, in an age when books were comparatively of slow sale ; and that demand must have offered abundant encouragement to publish the more important plays, which were written after 1600, and which remained unpublished till the appearance of the folio of 1623. There were three great exceptions, as we have seen, to the system of non-publication—"Hamlet," "Lear," and "Troilus and Cressida." We are inclined to believe that each of these was published under the authority of the author, or, at any rate, without his power of suppression ; although their publication might be at variance with the general policy of the proprietors of the Globe Theatre. "Hamlet," "enlarged to almost as much again as it was," was printed, it may be supposed, to vindicate the author's claims to something higher than the early sketch which appeared in the edition of 1603. "Lear" and "Troilus and Cressida" stand, we believe, upon other ground. They were both, as we shall have to state more particularly in our notices of those plays, probably acted for the first time before the court of James I., and it is not impossible that the copies so used were out of the control of the players who represented these dramas ; and that some one, authorised or not, printed each play from the copy employed at these private represen-

tations "by the King's Majesty's servants." The utter disregard of metre in the "Lear" proves that the edition was not printed from the author's copy.

The statements which we have thus laid before our readers are necessary to explain the principles upon which our text has been founded. The folio of 1623 contains thirty-six plays : of these, thirteen were published in the author's lifetime, with such internal evidences of authenticity, and under such circumstances, as warrant us in receiving them as authentic copies. These copies are, therefore, entitled to a very high respect in the settlement of the author's text. But they do not demand an exclusive respect ; for the evidence, in several instances, is most decided, that the author's posthumous copies in manuscript were distinguished from the printed copies by verbal alterations, by additions, by omissions not arbitrarily made, by a more correct metrical arrangement. To refer these differences to alterations made by the players has been a favourite theory with some of Shakspeare's editors ; but it is manifestly an absurd one. We see, in numerous cases, the minute but most effective touches of the skilful artist ; and a careful examination of this matter in the plays where the alterations are most numerous is quite sufficient to satisfy us of the jealous care with which Shakspeare watched over the more important of these productions, so as to leave with his "fellows" more complete and accurate copies than had been preserved by the press.

Between the quarto editions of the four Comedies, — "Love's Labour's Lost," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "The Merchant of Venice," "Much Ado about Nothing," — and the folio of 1623, the variations are exceedingly few; and these have probably, for the most part, been created by the printer. Of the Histories, "Richard II." in the folio is founded upon the quarto of 1608, with the omission of about fifty lines. The variations between the two copies of "The First Part of Henry IV." are very slight. In the "Second Part of Henry IV." there are large additions in the folio. "Richard III.," in the folio, presents an example of constant verbal alterations, evidently made with a most minute scrupulousness: there are two passages omitted, although in the author's best manner, and about a hundred and twenty lines added. Of the Tragedies, "Romeo and Juliet," in the folio, is founded upon the quarto of 1599, with occasional verbal alterations. "Titus Andronicus" is essentially the same in the folio as the quarto of 1600, with the exception of the added scene. "Hamlet," in the folio, is founded upon the quarto of 1604, but the verbal alterations are numerous; and there are passages omitted in the folio which we should indeed be sorry to lose, although there was probably a dramatic reason for their omission. The most important of the variations between the quartos and the folio are to be found in "Lear." The verbal alterations are perpetually recurring, but the changes of the

folio are decidedly to be preferred in nearly every instance. The metrical arrangement of the quarto is one mass of confusion ; we have about fifty lines added in the folio, and about two hundred and twenty-five lines omitted : for these omissions there is again a sufficient dramatic reason, although it is truly fortunate that passages of such exquisite beauty as they for the most part are should have been preserved to us in the original publication. "*Troilus and Cressida*," in the folio, differs in the very smallest degree from the text of the quarto copy. The verbal changes in "*Othello*" are few ; but there are many additional lines in the folio.

We have thus seen that of the fourteen plays originally published in quarto, which may be considered authentic, nine of that number contain very unimportant differences from the text in the folio. The differences, however, are not merely the typographical changes which always creep into any new edition : they are in many cases either the corrections of the author, or the corrections of those who represented the plays. The Theatre, there can be no doubt, possessed a manuscript copy, as Heminge and Condell expressly tell us ; and the variations, especially in the metrical arrangement, even in those plays which appear the most alike, afford satisfactory evidence that in the re-publication some manuscript was referred to. We are bound, therefore, we think, upon these grounds, to make the later copy the foundation of the text, pointing out the

deviations from the text of the quartos, whenever the differences are of importance.

Of the other five plays, in which the variations between the quarto editions and the folio are more important, we have not only to adhere to the principles just laid down, but to preserve even what the author, we may believe, advisedly rejected ; and, in preserving it, to furnish materials for a just appreciation of the judgment with which he retrenched as well as added. Where there are omissions in the folio of passages found in the quartos, such omissions not being superseded by an extended or a condensed passage of a similar character, we give them a place in the text ; distinguishing them, however, by brackets. But we utterly object to the principle which has too often guided the modern editors, of making up a text, when the variations are considerable, out of the text of the quartos and that of the folio. If any part of the variation demonstrates that it is the author's improvement, we are bound to receive the whole of the improvement, with the exception of any manifest typographical error ; satisfying, however, the critical reader, by giving him the original passage in a note. To act upon any other principle is to set up private judgment against all authority.

But if the principle which we have just laid down be all-important with regard to the authentic quartos, how much more important is it with reference to those plays which are essentially, and upon the face of them, imperfect and deformed !

In three instances, those of "Romeo and Juliet," "Henry V.," and "The Merry Wives of Windsor," and especially in the first two, the modern editors have received the text of the imperfect copy as something to be relied upon ; and wherever they have found a line not in the folio they have thrust it in, and clamoured for its restoration. These imperfect plays, amongst which we include the two Parts of "The Contention," are of the highest importance to the student of Shakspeare, to show how our great poet earned his laurel, in the opinion of his contemporaries, by the most diligent industry : —

" Yet must I not give Nature all ; thy art,
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part : —
For though the poet's matter Nature be,
His art doth give the fashion : and that he
Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
Upon the Muses' anvil ; turn the same
(And himself with it) that he thinks to frame ;
Or, for the laurel he may gain a scorn, —
For a good poet's made, as well as born :
And such wert thou."

Having disposed, then, of these general considerations of the value of the quarto copies, we have to inquire what reliance we are to place upon the texts of those plays which appear for the first time in the folio of 1623, and upon which we must absolutely depend for a competent knowledge of these inestimable productions. We say absolutely, for in any matters of serious difficulty the subsequent editions offer us comparatively very little aid. The second edition of 1632 was

held up as an authority by Steevens, because, in some degree, it appeared to fall in with his notions of versification. We doubt if it had an editor properly so called ; for the most obvious typographical errors are repeated without change. The printer, probably, of this edition occasionally pieced out what he considered an imperfect line, and altered a word here and there that had grown obsolete during the changes in our language since Shakspeare first wrote. But, beyond this, we have no help in the second edition ; and none whatever in the subsequent ones. For eighteen plays, therefore, the folio of 1623 must be received as the only accredited copy — standing in the same relation to the text as the one manuscript of an ancient author. For four other plays it must be received as the only accredited complete copy. How, then, appear the copies printed for the first time in this folio with regard to correctness ? We have no hesitation in stating that, with one or two exceptions, the text of these plays may be considered to be as correct, and as little corrupted, as those which had the advantage of having previously gone through the press. This is a most remarkable circumstance with reference to any posthumous publication ; and when we consider the essential difficulties which belong to the correct printing of a play — the mistaking of one character for another, the confusion which must arise from the intermingling of prose and verse, the varieties of the versification itself, and the possibility of receiving the stage

directions as the text,—it is perfectly astonishing that these productions have come down to us with so few vital errors and deformities.

After this long digression (which is however material to the study of Shakspeare), we return to his modern Editors.

It appears from Malone's preface that a feeling was gaining ground that the constant accession of notes to Shakspeare was becoming an evil: — "The admirers of this poet will, I trust, not merely pardon the great accession of new notes in the present edition, but examine them with some degree of pleasure. An idle notion has been propagated that Shakspeare has been *buried under his commentators*; and it has again and again been repeated by the tasteless and the dull, 'that notes, though often necessary, are *necessary evils*.' During the era of conjectural criticism and capricious innovation, notes were indeed evils: while one page was covered with ingenious sophistry in support of some idle conjecture, and another was wasted in its overthrow, or in erecting a new fabric equally unsubstantial as the former While our object is to support and establish what the poet wrote, to illustrate his phraseology by comparing it with that of his contemporaries, and to explain his fugitive allusions to customs long since disused and forgotten,—while this object is kept steadily in view, if even every line of his plays were accompanied with a comment, every intelligent reader would be indebted to the industry of him

who produced it. Such uniformly has been the object of the notes now presented to the public. Let us then hear no more of this barbarous jargon concerning Shakspeare's having been *elucidated* into *obscurity*, and buried under the load of his commentators." There is a great deal of truth in this ; but it is not all the truth. Malone disagrees with the following observation of Johnson : — " It is not (he remarks) very grateful to consider how little the succession of editors has added to this author's power of pleasing. He was read, admired, studied, and imitated, while he was yet deformed with all the improprieties which ignorance and neglect could accumulate upon him." The new editor, with a pardonable complacency towards his calling, says, — " He certainly was read, admired, studied, and imitated at the period mentioned ; but surely not in the same degree as at present. The succession of editors has effected this ; it has made him understood ; it has made him popular ; it has shown every one who is capable of reading how much superior he is not only to Jonson and Fletcher, whom the bad taste of the last age from the time of the Restoration to the end of the century set above him, but to all the dramatic poets of antiquity." Jonson and Fletcher were not set above Shakspeare, as we have demonstratively shown, from the time of the Restoration to the end of the century. But even if they were, it was not the succession of editors that had made Shakspeare popular. A plain reprint of Shakspeare

without a single note, but with the spelling modernized, would have made him more popular than all the critical editions which the eighteenth century had produced. Malone says, that during that century "thirty thousand copies of Shakspeare have been dispersed through England." The number would have been quadrupled if Shakspeare had been left to his own unaided power. Much of what the commentators did, especially in the illustration of Shakspeare's phraseology and the explanation of his fugitive allusions, they did well. But they must needs be critics, without having any system of criticism more profound than the easy task of fault-finding; and thus they rendered Shakspeare less popular than he would have been in an age when criticism was little understood, and men's eyes were dazzled by an array of names to support some flippant remark upon Shakspeare's want of art, some exhibition of his ignorance, some detection of his anachronisms, some discovery of a quibble beyond the plain meaning of the word. It is scarcely possible to read a scene of the variorum "Shaksperes" without feeling the utter want of a reverent spirit towards the author. These things sank more deeply into the minds of the readers of Shakspeare than the general expressions of the commentators' admiration; which after all seemed little more than compliments to themselves in their association with the poet. Schlegel, we cannot but acknowledge, has stated the

truth with tolerable exactness : — “ Like Dante, Shakspeare has received the indispensable but cumbersome honour of being treated like a classical author of antiquity. The oldest editions have been carefully collated, and where the readings seemed corrupted many improvements have been attempted ; and the whole literature of his age has been drawn forth from the oblivion to which it had been consigned, for the sake of explaining the phrases, and illustrating the allusions, of Shakspeare. Commentators have succeeded one another in such numbers, that their labours, with the critical controversies to which they have given rise, constitute of themselves a library of no inconsiderable magnitude. These labours are deserving of our praise and gratitude ; and more especially the historical inquiries into the sources from which Shakspeare drew his materials, and into the former state of the English stage. But with respect to the criticisms which are merely a of philological nature, I am frequently compelled to differ from the commentators ; and where they consider him merely as a poet, endeavour to pronounce upon his merits, and to enter into his views, I must separate myself from them entirely. I have hardly ever found either truth or profundity in their observations ; and these critics seem to me to be but stammering interpreters of the general and almost idolatrous admiration of his countrymen.” *

* Lectures on Dramatic Literature, Black's Translation, vol. II, p. 103.

We open a play at a venture, to see how far in the spirit of a modest appreciation of themselves, and an earnest admiration of their author, the editors laboured to render Shakspeare popular. It is Hamlet. Let us put down a few of their annotations:—

“*Angry parle.* This is one of the affected words introduced by Lyly.” — STEEVENS.

“*A mote it is, &c.* These lines are in the enlarged quarto of 1604. Many of its (Hamlet’s) absurdities as well as beauties arose from the quantity added after it was first written.” — STEEVENS.

“*Shall I strike at it with my partizan.* I am unwilling to suppose that Shakspeare could appropriate these absurd effusions to Horatio.” — STEEVENS.

“*I am too much i’ the sun.* I question whether a quibble between *sun* and *son* be not here intended.” — FARMER.

“*To school in Wittenberg.*” The anachronism is first pointed out by MALONE; and then we are told by RITSON that Shakspeare derived his knowledge of this famous university from a trumpery book called “The Life of Jack Wilton.”

“*Nemean.* The right prosody is accidental.” — MALONE.

“*Rest, rest, perturbed spirit.*” The skill displayed in the management of the Ghost is contrasted with his management of other preternatural beings: “They are but weak and inefficacious pageants.” — STEEVENS.

Conclusion of Scene I., Act II. "The poet's ill and obscure expression seems to have been caused by his affectation of concluding the scene with a couplet." — JOHNSON.

"*Being a good kissing carrion.*" Warburton's reading being given: "This is a noble emendation, which almost sets the critic on a level with the author." — JOHNSON."

"*The satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards.*" Warburton says that the allusion is to Juvenal, Satire 10. "If Shakspeare had read Juvenal he could not have wrongly accented Posthumus." — FARMER.

"*Now might I do it, &c.* This speech is too horrible to be read or to be uttered." — JOHNSON. "Yet some moral may be extracted from it, as all his subsequent calamities were owing to this savage refinement of revenge." — M. MASON.

"*Heaven's face doth glow, &c.* In Shakspeare's licentious diction the meaning may be," &c. — MALONE.

End of Act IV. "Shakspeare has been unfortunate in his management of the story of this play, the most striking circumstances of which arise so early in its formation as not to leave him room for a conclusion suited to the importance of its beginning. After this last interview with the Ghost, the character of Hamlet has lost all its consequence." — STEEVENS.

*Nature is fine in love ; and where 'tis fine
It sends some precious instance of itself
After the thing it loves.*

"These lines are not in the quarto, and might have been omitted in the folio without great loss, for they are obscure and affected." — JOHNSON.

"*It was that very day that young Hamlet was born.* The poet in the fifth act had forgotten what he wrote in the first." — BLACKSTONE.

"*There's a divinity that shapes our ends
Rough-hew them how we will.*

"Dr. Farmer informs me that these words are merely technical. A wool-man, butcher, and dealer in *skewers*, lately observed to him that his nephew (an idle lad) could only *assist* him in making them; 'He could *rough-hew* them, but I was obliged to *shape their ends*.' To shape the ends of *wool-skewers*, i. e. to *point* them, requires a degree of skill: any one can *rough-hew* them. Whoever recollects the profession of Shakspeare's father will admit that his son might be no stranger to such terms. I have frequently seen packages of wool pinned up with *skewers*."
— STEEVENS.

Concluding Remarks. — "The poet is accused of having shown little regard to poetical justice, and may be charged with equal neglect of poetical probability. The apparition left the regions of the dead to little purpose; the revenge which he demands is not obtained but by the death of him that was required to take it; and the gratification which would arise from the destruction of an usurper and a murderer is abated by the

untimely death of Ophelia, the young, the beautiful, the harmless, and the pious." — JOHNSON.

"Hamlet cannot be said to have pursued his ends by very warrantable means; and if the poet, when he sacrificed him at last, meant to have enforced such a moral, it is not the worst that can be deduced from the play. . . . Hamlet seems to have been hitherto regarded as a hero not undeserving the pity of the audience; and because no writer on Shakspeare has taken the pains to point out the immoral tendency of his character." — STEEVENS.

The editors of the first collection of the works of Shakspeare, in their "Address to the great Variety of Readers," say—"Read him therefore; and again, and again: and if then you do not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger not to understand him." This was advice that could not have proceeded from any common mind. The foundation of a right understanding of Shakspeare is love. Steevens read again and again without love, and therefore without understanding. Boswell, the editor of Malone's posthumous edition, speaking of Steevens's note on Hamlet from which we have given an extract, says, that Steevens has expressed himself "with as much asperity as if he had had a personal quarrel with the author." Steevens had a pettifogging mind, without a particle of lofty feeling, without imagination, without even a logical apprehension of the small questions to which he applied himself. But he was wonderfully la-

borious. Knowing nothing of the principles of philosophical criticism, he spared no pains in hunting up illustrative facts; he dabbled in classical learning so as to be able to apply a quotation with considerable neatness; and he laboured his style into epigrammatic smartness which passed for wit. The vicious style of the letters of Junius was evidently his model; and what that cowardly libeller had been in the political world, Steevens was ambitious to be in the literary. He very often attacked, under a mask, those with whom he mixed in intimate companionship; till at last his name became a by-word for meanness and malignity. It was impossible that such a man could have written about Shakspeare without displaying "as much asperity as if he had had a personal quarrel with him." And yet he was to be pitied. Like Hamlet, he had a task laid upon him above his powers. Early in life he attached himself to literature and literary pursuits, not from any necessity, for his fortune was ample, but with a real and sincere devotion. He attached himself to Shakspeare. He became an editor of Shakspeare. He was associated with Johnson in the preparation of an edition, and what he did in his own way was far superior to what his colleague had effected without him. He gave a new tone to the critical illustration of Shakspeare, by bringing not only the elegant literature of Shakspeare's own age to compare with him, but by

hunting over all the sweepings of the book-stalls of the same age, to find the application of a familiar allusion, or the meaning of an uncommon word. But he became ambitious to show his power of writing, as well as his diligence. If we turn over the variorum editions, and light upon a note which contains something like a burst of genial admiration for the author, we find the name of Warburton affixed to it. Warburton's intellect was capacious enough for love of Shakspeare. But he delighted in decorating his opinions with the tinsel of his own paradoxes. Steevens was the man to pull off the tinsel; but he did it after the fashion in which the lace was stripped from Brother Jack's coat:—"Courteous reader, you are given to understand that zeal is never so highly obliged as when you set it a-tearing; and Jack, who doted on that quality in himself, allowed it at this time its full swing. Thus it happened that, stripping down a parcel of gold lace a little too hastily, he rent the main body of his coat from top to bottom; and whereas his talent was not of the happiest in taking up a stitch, he knew no better way than to darn it again with packthread and a skewer."* The zeal for tearing increased with Steevens. He retired for fifteen years from the editorship of Shakspeare, to recreate himself in the usual way in which such minds find diversion — by anonymous attacks upon his literary contemporaries. But in 1793 he returned with

* Tale of a Tub.

renewed vigour to his labour of love, the defacing of Shakspere. Malone, in the interval, had been working hard, though perhaps with no great talent, in the endeavour to preserve every vestige of his author. He was successful, and Steevens was thenceforward his enemy. He would no longer walk in the path that he had once trod. He rejected all his old conservative opinions. In his edition of 1793, he sets out in his Advertisement with the following well-known manifesto against a portion of the works of Shakspere, the supposed merit or demerit of which, it is perfectly evident, must have been applied as a standard for other portions of Shakspeare's poetical excellence:—"We have not reprinted the Sonnets, &c., of Shakspeare, because the strongest Act of Parliament that could be framed would fail to compel readers into their service; notwithstanding these miscellaneous poems have derived every possible advantage from the literature and judgment of their only intelligent editor, Mr. Malone, whose implements of criticism, like the ivory rake and golden spade in Prudentius, are on this occasion disgraced by the objects of their culture. Had Shakspeare produced no other works than these, his name would have reached us with as little celebrity as time has conferred on that of Thomas Watson, an older and much more elegant sonnetteer." Brother Jack is here not only tearing the coat, but throwing the waistcoat into the fire. Let us

hear how he means to deal with the coat itself:—
“ But, as we are often reminded by our ‘ brethren of the craft ’ that this or that emendation, however apparently necessary, is not the *genuine text of Shakspeare*, it might be imagined that we had received this text from its fountain-head, and were therefore certain of its purity. Whereas few literary occurrences are better understood than that it came down to us discoloured by ‘ the variation of every soil ’ through which it had flowed, and that it stagnated at last in the muddy reservoir of the first folio: in plainer terms, that the vitiations of a careless theatre were seconded by those of as ignorant a press. The integrity of dramas thus prepared for the world is just on a level with the innocence of females nursed in a camp and educated in a bagnio. As often, therefore, as we are told that, by admitting corrections warranted by common sense and the laws of metre, we have not rigidly adhered to the text of Shakspeare, we shall entreat our opponents to exchange that phrase for another ‘ more germane,’ and say, instead of it, that we have deviated from the text of the publishers of single plays in quarto, or their successors, the editors of the first folio; that we have sometimes followed the suggestions of a Warburton, a Johnson, a Farmer, or a Tyrwhitt, in preference to the decisions of a Hemings or a Condell, notwithstanding their choice of readings might have been influenced by associates whose high-sounding

names cannot fail to enforce respect, viz. William Ostler, John Shanke, William Sly, and Thomas Poope." Again :—" It is time, instead of a timid and servile adherence to ancient copies, when (offending against sense and metre) they furnish no real help, that a future editor, well acquainted with the phraseology of our author's age, should be at liberty to restore some apparent meaning to his corrupted lines, and a decent flow to his obstructed versification. The latter (as already has been observed) may be frequently effected by the expulsion of useless and supernumerary syllables, and an occasional supply of such as might fortuitously have been omitted, notwithstanding the declaration of Hemings and Condell, whose fraudulent prefacé asserts that they have published our author's plays 'as absolute in their numbers as he conceived them.' 'Till somewhat resembling the process above suggested be authorized, the public will ask in vain for a commodious and pleasant text of Shakspeare. Nothing will be lost to the world on account of the measure recommended, there being folios and quartos enough remaining for the use of antiquarian or critical travellers, to whom a jolt over a rugged pavement may be more delectable than an easy passage over a smooth one, though they both conduct to the same object."

And this, then, is the text of Shakspeare that England has rejoiced in for half a century! These are the labours, whether of correction or

of critical opinion, that have made Shakspeare "popular." The critical opinions have ceased, we believe, to have any effect except amongst a few pedantic persons, who fancy that it is cleverer to dispraise than to admire. But the text as corrupted by Steevens is that which is generally put into the hands of the readers of Shakspeare. The number of editions of the text alone of Shakspeare printed during the present century is by no means inconsiderable; and of these editions, which are constantly multiplying, there are many thousand copies year by year supplying the large and increasing demand for a knowledge of our greatest poet. With very few exceptions, indeed, all these editions are copies of some edition whose received text is considered as a standard, — even to the copying of typographical errors. That received text, to use the words of the title-page of what is called the trade edition, is "From the text of the corrected copies left by the late George Steevens, Esq., and Edmund Malone, Esq." If we were to suppose, from this title, that Steevens and Malone had agreed together to leave a text for the benefit of posterity, we should be signally deceived. The received text is that produced by Steevens, when he fancied himself "at liberty to restore some apparent meaning to Shakspeare's corrupted lines, and a decent flow to his obstructed versification." Malone was walking in his own track, that of extreme caution, and an implicit reliance on the

very earliest copies. The text of his edition of 1821, though deformed with abundant marks of carelessness, is an honest text, if we admit the principle upon which it is founded. But the text of Steevens, in which the peculiar versification of Shakspeare, especially its freedom, its vigour, its variety of pause, its sweetness, its majesty, are sacrificed to what he called "polished versification," has been received for nearly half a century as the standard text.

Hayley, the head of the school of English poetry "in the most high and balmy state" of Steevens, wrote his epitaph, which concludes with these lines:—

"This tomb may perish, but not so his name,
Who shed new lustre upon Shakspeare's fame."

This may run by the side of Johnson's praise of a sermonizing note of Warburton:—"It almost sets the critic on a level with the author." Steevens, shedding new lustre upon Shakspeare! Warburton, almost upon a level with Shakspeare! Thus men talked in those days, when their notion of poetry was simply that it was not prose. Something in which the mechanical form was to be obviously distinguished from other forms of composition—a sermon, an essay—was poetry. They looked for no inner life in poetry, no organization of its own, that should determine its form. They looked for eight or ten syllable verse, for blank verse or couplet. They looked for syllabic regularity in Shakspeare and a moral.

When they found not the moral they shook their heads. When they found what they called "superfluous syllables" in Shakspeare's lines, out went the syllables, by carrying over a word to the next line, sometimes of two, sometimes of three syllables. If there was a gap left it was filled up with rubbish. The excess of the second line was carried over to the third, till a halting-place was found or made. This was mending the metre. Mending the moral was not quite so easy to the editors; they left that task to the players, who, to do them justice, were in no degree slow to set about the work with the most laudable emulation of the labour of the critics. They cut out a scene here, and put in another there. Lear was to end with a jig, and Hamlet with a song. The manager-botchers, however, in time grew timid. They wanted new Tates to make new happy endings, but the age of George III. was not luxuriant enough to produce such daring geniuses. The managers, therefore, were obliged to be content with the glorious improvements of the seventeenth century in all essentials. But they did what they could. Shakspeare's songs were poor, simple things; they had no point; not much about love in them; nothing of loyalty; and so Shakspeare's comedies were always presented with new songs by the salaried poet of "the house," for "the house" kept a poet, as the maker of razor-strops did in those days. But Garrick, the twin-star of Shakspeare—

"Shakspeare and Garrick like twin-stars shall shine,
And earth irradiate with a beam divine" —

had many a twinkle of his own. In the "Biographia Dramatica" we have a list of thirty-nine plays by Garrick: — "He is well known to have been the author of the following, some of which are originals, and the rest translations or alterations from other authors, with a design to adapt them to the present taste of the public." (A predecessor printed upon the title of a tragedy of which in a similar way he was "the author," "King Lear, a Tragedy: by Nahum Tate.") Garrick's Shakspearean authorship was confined to Romeo and Juliet, The Fairies (Midsummer-Night's Dream), The Tempest, Catherine and Petrucio (Taming of the Shrew), Florizel and Perdita (Winter's Tale), Cymbeline, Hamlet. This was pretty well for a twin-star. Is it uncharitable to infer that the Stratford Jubilee in 1769 was something as much for the honour of David Garrick as of William Shakspeare? On this memorable occasion the corporation of Stratford opened their proceedings by thus addressing Garrick: — "Sir, you who have done the memory of Shakspeare so much honour are esteemed the fittest person to be appointed the first steward of his jubilee." The ode upon dedicating the town-hall, and erecting a statue to Shakspeare, was written by Garrick, as well as spoken by him. It is quite as good as birthday odes used to be. It would be beyond our limits to describe

the effect which this ode produced ; how rapturous was the public dinner ; how brilliant were the transparencies in the hall ; and how appropriate were the characters of the masquerade, at which a thousand persons were present. Garrick spoke an oration in honour of Shakspeare, and thus he honours him : — “ We get knowledge from Shakspeare, not with painful labour, as we dig gold from the mine, but at leisure, and with delight, as we gain health and vigour from the sports of the field. A picture frequently pleases which represents an object that in itself is disgusting. Teniers represents a number of Dutch boors drunk and quarrelling in a wretched hovel, and we admire the piece for a kind of relative beauty, as a just imitation of life and nature : with this beauty we are struck in Shakspeare ; we know his originals, and contemplate the truth of his copy with delight.”

This is the narrow view of the art of Shakspeare which Johnson impressed upon his pupil. We read on, and we are bewildered. Slightly have we spoken of Garrick, because we felt that to do what he has done with the masterpieces of Shakspeare, and especially with Hamlet, was to show that he did not understand them. But there is something in this “ Oration in Honour of Shakspeare,” spoken by him at Stratford in 1769, and written by him, as it is said, which shows to us that the author of that oration, or parts of that oration, was far in advance of the critical

opinions of his day. Let us present a consecutive passage which immediately follows that already transcribed : — “ It was happy for Shakspeare, and for us, that in his time there was no example by the imitation of which he might hope to be approved. *He painted nature as it appeared to his own eye, and not from a transcript of what was seen in nature by another.* The genius looks not *upon* nature, but *through* it; not at the outline only, but at the differences, nice and innumerable, within it; at all that the variation of tints, and the endless combinations of light and shade, can express. As the power of perception is more, more is still perceived in the inexhaustible varieties of life; but to copy only what another has seen is to render superior perspicacity vain; and neither the painter nor the poet can hope to excel who is content to reflect a reflection, and to seek for nothing in nature which others have not found.

“ But there are beauties in Shakspeare not relative—powers that do not imitate, but create. He was as another Nature: he represents not only actions that were not performed, but beings that do not exist; yet to these beings he assigns not only faculties, but character; he gives them not only peculiar dispositions, but characteristic modes of expressing them: they have character, not merely from the passions and understandings, but from situation and habit; Caliban and Ariel, like Shallow and Falstaff, are not more strongly

distinguished in consequence of different natures than of different circumstances and employments.

“ As there was no poet to seduce Shakspeare into imitation, there was no critic to restrain his extravagance ; yet we find *the force of his own judgment sufficient to rein his imagination, and to reduce to system the new world which he made.*

“ Does any one now inquire whether Shakspeare was learned ? Do they mean whether he knew how to call the same thing by several names ? for learning, with respect to languages, teaches no more ; learning, in its best sense, is only nature at the rebound ; it is only the discovery of what is ; and he who looks upon nature with a penetrating eye derives learning from the source. *Rules of poetry have been deduced from examples, and not examples from rules :* as a poet, therefore, Shakspeare did not need books ; and in no instance in which he needed them as a philosopher or historian does he appear ignorant of what they teach.

“ His language, like his conceptions, is strongly marked with the characteristic of nature ; it is bold, figurative, and significant ; his terms, rather than his sentences, are metaphorical ; he calls an endless multitude a sea, by a happy allusion to the perpetual succession of wave to wave ; and he immediately expresses opposition by taking up arms, which, being fit in itself, he was not solicitous to accommodate to his first image. This is the language in which a figurative and rapid

conception will always be expressed : this is the language both of the prophet and the poet, of native eloquence and divine inspiration.

“ It has been objected to Shakspeare that he wrote without any moral purpose ; but I boldly reply that he has effected a thousand. He has not, indeed, always contrived a series of events from the whole of which some moral precept may be inferred ; but he has conveyed some rule of conduct, some principle of knowledge, not only in almost every speech of his dialogue, but in every incident, character, and event.”

We would attempt to deprive no man of his fame ; but the passage which we have just transcribed appears to us so contrary to the habits of thought which Garrick must have acquired from his theatrical practice, so opposed to the recorded opinions to which he was in the habit of looking up almost with slavish reverence, that we cannot receive the records of the Stratford Jubilee as evidence that he wrote it. What—was the manufacturer of Shakspeare's plays into farces, and operas, and tragedies with moral endings, to be the first man in England to discover that Shakspeare was a creator ; that he lived in a world of his own creation ; that the practice of art went before the rules ; that the question of his learning was to be settled contrary to the way in which the pedants of criticism had settled it, by the proof that his knowledge was all-abundant ; that his judgment was sufficient to rein his ima-

gination ; that he worked upon system, and was therefore an artist in the highest sense of the word ; that what has been called the confusion of his metaphors was the language both of the prophet and the poet ; that his moral purpose was to be collected incidentally, not only through informal speeches, but in every character and event ? The beginning and the end of Garrick's oration is commonplace. Here is a flood of light shed upon the English opinion of Shakspeare. Was there any man in England, at that time, whose philosophy was large enough, whose knowledge was comprehensive enough, to allow him to think thus ? Was ~~there~~ any man in England who dared so to express himself, in the face of authorities who had so recently propounded a totally different system ? There was but one man that we can dream of, and he was Edmund Burke. We cannot think that Garrick wrote these sentences. We can hardly think that he knew the full force of what he was uttering.

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It would be a dreary task to attempt to trace all that was published about Shakspeare from the date of Johnson's first edition to the close of the eighteenth century. A few out of the heap of these forgotten emanations of the critical mind, the multitude of which proves the strong direction of the national admiration, may not be unprofitably noticed. Johnson, when he has dismissed Shakspeare from the shackles of the unities,

says, "I am almost frightened at my own temerity." He dreaded the advocates of a contrary opinion, "as Æneas withdrew from the defence of Troy when he saw Neptune shaking the wall." A Neptune arrived from Scotland, in the shape of "Cursory Remarks on Tragedy." This work, though it dropped into oblivion, was the performance of W. Richardson, "Professor of Humanity in the University of Glasgow." A small specimen will suffice:—"With an impartiality which becomes every man that dares to think for himself, let us allow him (Shakspeare) great merit as a comic writer, greater still as a poet, but little, very little, as a tragedian. . . . And is then poor Shakspeare to be excluded from the number of great tragedians? He is; but let him be banished, like Homer from the republic of Plato, with marks of distinction and veneration; and may his forehead, like the Grecian bard's, be bound with an honourable wreath of ever-blooming flowers." There can be no doubt of the paternity of this production. The same Professor of Humanity in the University of Glasgow produced, in the same year, "A Philosophical Analysis and Illustration of some of Shakspeare's Characters;" and this book has gone, with the appendage of new characters, through many editions; and is allied, moreover, to Essays on this and that Shakspearean thing, and a "perilous shot" indeed in "An Essay on the Faults of Shakspeare." We shall

give no more than a sentence :—“ I am inclined to believe, and shall now endeavour to illustrate that the greatest blemishes in Shakespeare have proceeded from his want of consummate taste. Having no perfect discernment, proceeding from rational investigation, of the true cause of beauty in poetical composition, he had never established in his mind any system of regular process, or any standard of dramatic excellence.” Yet this solemn person, who thinks that Shakspeare had never established in his mind any system of regular process, had no perfect discernment of the true cause of beauty, has the temerity to write a book of four hundred pages on his dramatic characters. Something of a very different description was produced three years after : “ An Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff.” The author was Maurice Morgann, once Under Secretary of State. The book is far above the age. The author is a thinker, and one who has been taught to think by Shakspeare. Take an example :—“ In the groups of other poets, the parts which are not seen do not, in fact, exist. . . . Those characters in Shakespeare which are seen only in part, are yet capable of being unfolded and understood in the whole ; every part being, in fact, relative, and inferring all the rest.” The “ Remarks on some of the Characters of Shakespeare,” by Thomas Whately, published in 1785, is something different from the performance of the Scotch pro-

fessor. What could induce his eminent relation, who republished it in 1839, to write thus?—"Mr. Whately, it should be observed, is merely pointing out that such and such speeches *do* indicate character; not that they were, in each case, written with that *design*. If, then, they really *are* characteristic, the criticism is fully borne out, whatever may have been the design of Shakspeare. I doubt whether Shakspeare ever had any thought at all of making his personages speak characteristically. In most instances, I conceive—probably in all—he drew characters correctly, because he *could not avoid it*, and would never have attained, in that department, such excellence as he has, if he had made any studied efforts for it. And the same, probably, may be said of Homer, and of those other writers who have excelled the most in delineating characters." Was the "Paul preaching at Athens," with the Apostle characterised in his majesty, the sceptic in his doubt, and the enthusiast in his veneration, (characters marked as deeply as the Richard and Macbeth upon which the relation of the Archbishop of Dublin writes,)—was this produced by Raffaele because he could not avoid it? We would willingly give an extract or two from this clever book, but its republication renders such unnecessary. There is one more work, and one only, to which we may point as being superior to the ordinary criticism of that age—"the butterwoman's rank

to market." It is Mr. Whiter's "Specimen of a Commentary on Shakspeare," published in 1794. We have often quoted it, which may be sufficient to mention for our present purpose.

Amidst the crowd of writers, from the middle to the end of the eighteenth century, who were adding to the mass of comment upon Shakspeare, whether in the shape of essay, letter, poem, philosophical analysis, illustration, there was one who, not especially devoting himself to Shakspearean criticism, had a considerable influence in the gradual formation of a sound national taste. The "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry," by Thomas Percy, originally published in 1765, showed to the world that there was something in the early writers beyond the use to which they had been applied by Shakspeare's commentators. In these fragments it would be seen that England, from the earliest times, had possessed an inheritance of real poetry; and that he who had breathed a new life into the forms of the past, and had known how to call up the heroes of chivalry, — to

"Enlive their pale trunks, that the present age
Joys in their joy, and trembles at their rage,"

was not without models of earnest passion and noble simplicity in the ancient ballads. The publication of these "Reliques" led the way, though slowly, to the study of our elder poets; and every advance in this direction was a step

towards the more extended knowledge, and the better understanding, of Shakspeare himself. Percy, in one part of his first volume, collected "such ballads as are quoted by Shakespeare, or contribute in any degree to illustrate his writings." He did this with his usual good taste; and every one knows with what skill he connected in the tale of "The Friar of Orders Grey" those "innumerable little fragments of ancient ballads" which we find dispersed through the plays of Shakspeare. In his introduction to this division of his work he gives some very sensible observations upon the origin of the English stage. In the following remarks on the Histories of our poet he takes a different, and we think a juster, view of their origin and purpose than Malone and the other commentators. Although Percy puts his own opinions cautiously, if not timidly, it is clear that he had higher notions of Shakspeare as an artist than those who were arrogating to themselves the merit of having made him "popular." He who holds that it is "the first canon of sound criticism to examine any work by whatever rule the author prescribed for his own observance" is not far from a right appreciation of Shakspeare:—"But while Shakespeare was the favourite dramatic poet, his Histories had such superior merit, that he might well claim to be the chief, if not the only, historic dramatist that kept possession of the English stage; which gives a strong support to the tradition mentioned

by Gildon, that, in a conversation with Ben Jonson, our bard vindicated his historical plays, by urging that, as he had found 'the nation in general very ignorant of history, he wrote them in order to instruct the people in this particular.' This is assigning not only a good motive, but a very probable reason, for his preference of this species of composition ; since we cannot doubt but his illiterate countrymen would not only want such instruction when he first began to write, notwithstanding the obscure dramatic chroniclers who preceded him, but also that they would highly profit by his admirable Lectures on English History so long as he continued to deliver them to his audience. And, as it implies no claim to his being the *first* who introduced our chronicles on the stage, I see not why the tradition should be rejected.

"Upon the whole, we have had abundant proof that both Shakespeare and his contemporaries considered his Histories, or Historical Plays, as of a legitimate distinct species, sufficiently separate from Tragedy and Comedy ; a distinction which deserves the particular attention of his critics and commentators, who, by not adverting to it, deprive him of his proper defence and best vindication for his neglect of the unities and departure from the classical dramatic forms. For, if it be the first canon of sound criticism to examine any work by whatever rule the author prescribed for his own observance, then we ought

not to try Shakespeare's Histories by the general laws of tragedy or comedy. Whether the rule itself be vicious or not is another inquiry: but, certainly, we ought to examine a work only by those principles according to which it was composed. 'This would save a deal of impertinent criticism.'

"The History of English Poetry," by Thomas Warton, published in 1774, was another of those works which advanced the study of our early literature in the spirit of elegant scholarship as opposed to bibliographical pedantry. Warton was an ardent lover of Shakspeare, as we may collect from several little poems; but he was scarcely out of the trammels of the classical school. His education had taught him that Shakspeare worked without art, and indeed he held that most of the Elizabethan poets so worked:—"It may here be added that only a few critical treatises, and but one 'Art of Poetry' were now written. Sentiments and images were not absolutely determined by the canons of composition; nor was genius awed by the consciousness of a future and final arraignment at the tribunal of taste. A certain dignity of inattention to niceties is now visible in our writers. Without too closely consulting a criterion of correctness, every man indulged his own capriciousness of invention. The poet's appeal was chiefly to his own voluntary feelings, his own immediate and peculiar mode of conception. And this freedom of thought

was often expressed in an undisguised frankness of diction ; a circumstance, by the way, that greatly contributed to give the flowing modulation which now marked the measures of our poets, and which soon degenerated into the opposite extreme of dissonance and asperity. Selection and discrimination were often overlooked. Shakespere wandered in pursuit of universal nature. The glancings of his eye are from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven. We behold him breaking the barriers of imaginary method. In the same scene he descends from his meridian of the noblest tragic sublimity to puns and quibbles, to the meanest merriment of a plebeian farce. In the midst of his dignity he resembles his own Richard II., the *skipping king*, who sometimes, discarding the state of a monarch,

‘ Mingled his royalty with carping fools.’

He seems not to have seen any impropriety in the most abrupt transitions, from dukes to buffoons, from senators to sailors, from counsellors to constables, and from kings to clowns. Like Virgil’s majestic oak —

‘ Quantum vertice ad auras
Ætherias, tantum radice in Tartara tendit.’ ”

All this is prettily said ; but it would not have been said if Warton had lived half a century later. Scattered about the periodical “ *Essayists* ” are many papers on Shakspeare, worth consulting by the student, which, if not very valuable in

themselves, indicate at least the progress of opinion. Joseph Warton, in "The Adventurer," where he reviews *The Tempest* and *Lear*, is a great stickler for the unities. Mackenzie, in "The Mirror," has a higher reverence for Shakspeare, and a more philosophical contempt for the application of the ancient rules to works having their own forms of vitality. Cumberland, in "The Observer," contrasts *Macbeth* and *Richard III.*; and he compares Shakspeare with *Æschylus* in a way which exhibits the resources of his scholarship and the elegance of his taste. All the fragmentary critical opinions upon Shakspeare, from the time of Johnson's Preface to the end of the century, exhibit some progress towards the real faith; some attempt to cast off not only the authority of the ancient rules of art, but the smaller authority of that lower school of individual judgment, which the Shakspearean commentators had been propping up, as well as they could, upon their own weak shoulders. Coleridge has well described their pretensions to authority:—"Every critic, who has or has not made a collection of black-letter books,—in itself a useful and respectable amusement,—puts on the seven-league boots of self-opinion, and strides at once from an illustrator into a supreme judge, and, blind and deaf, fills his three-ounce phial at the waters of Niagara; and determines positively the greatness of the cataract to be neither more nor less than his three-ounce phial has been able to receive." Such a

critic was Mr. Francis Douce ; who has been at the pains of making a formal essay "On the Anachronisms and some other Incongruities of Shakspeare." The words by which Mr. Douce describes these are, of course, "absurdities," "blunders," "distortions of reality," "negligence," "absurd violations of historical accuracy." Some concessions are, however, made by the critic :—"His bestowing the epithet of *gipsy* on Cleopatra is whimsical ; but may, perhaps, admit of defence." It is perfectly clear that a man who talks thus has not the slightest philosophical comprehension of the objects of Art, and the mode in which Art works. The domain of the literal and the ideal is held to be one and the same. It is truly said of the formative arts, by a living painter who knows the philosophy of his own art as much as he excels in its practice, that "a servile attention to the letter of description, as opposed to its translatable spirit, accuracy of historic details, exactness of costume, &c., are not essential in themselves, but are valuable only in proportion as they assist the demands of the art, or produce an effect on the imagination. This may sufficiently explain why an inattention to these points, on the part of great painters (and poets, as compared with mere historians), has interfered so little with their reputation." *

* Preface to Kugler's "History of Painting," by C. L. Eastlake, Esq., R. A.

One of the critics upon Shakspeare has sought to apologize for his anachronisms or "absurdities" by showing the example of the greatest of painters, that of Raffaële, in the "Transfiguration:"—"The two Dominicans on their knees are as shocking a violation of good sense, and of the unities of place, of time, and of action, as it is possible to imagine." It is clear that Martin Sherlock, who writes thus, did not understand the art of Raffaële. This was the spirit of all criticism upon painting and upon poetry. The critic never laboured to conceive the great prevailing idea of "the maker" in either art. He had no central point from which to regard his work. The great painters, especially in their treatment of religious compositions, had their whole soul permeated with the glory and beauty of the subjects upon which they treated. Their art was in itself a worship of the Great Infinite Idea of beauty and truth. The individual forms of humanity, the temporary fashions of human things, were lifted into the region of the universal and the permanent. The Dominicans on their knees in the "Transfiguration" were thus the representatives of adoring mortality during the unfolding to the bodily sense of heavenly glory. Who can see the anachronism, as it is called, till a small critic points it out? Art changes the very nature of those elements by which the imagination is affected. She touches them, and the things are propertied for her use. What is mean, separately

considered, is harmonised by her into greatness ; what is rude, into beauty ; what is low, into sublimity. We fear that it was a want of comprehending the high powers and privileges of Art, whether in poetry or painting, that made the " Shakspeare Gallery," which, towards the end of the last century, was to raise up an historic school of painting amongst us, a lamentable failure. The art of painting in England was to do homage to Shakspeare. The commercial boldness of a tradesman built a gallery in which the Reynoldses, and Wests, and Romneys, and Fuselis, and Northcotes, and Opies, might consecrate, by the highest efforts of painting, the inspiration which was to be borrowed from Shakspeare. The gallery was opened ; the works were munificently paid for ; they were engraved ; the text of Shakspeare was printed in larger type than the world had ever seen, to be a fit vehicle for the engravings. People exclaimed that Italy was outdone. With half a dozen exceptions, who can now look upon those works and not feel that the inspiration of Shakspeare was altogether wanting ? It is not that they violate the proprieties of costume, which are now better understood ; it is not that we are often shocked by the translation of a poetical image into a palpable thing — like the grinning fiend in Reynolds's " Death of Beaufort ;" but it is that the Shakspearean inspiration is not there. Lord Thurlow is reported to have said, in his course way, to one not wanting in talent,

“Romney, before you paint Shakspere, do, for God’s sake, read him.” But the proper reading of Shakspere was not the fragmentary reading which Thurlow probably had in his mind. The picturesque passages are to be easily discovered by a painter’s eye ; but these are the things which most painters will literally translate. Shakspere is always injured by such a literal translation. Deeply meditated upon, his scenes and characters float before the mind’s eye in forms which no artifices of theatrical ellusion, no embodiments of painting and sculpture, have ever presented. If such visions are to be fixed by the pencil, so as to elevate our delight and add to our reverence of the great original, that result must be attained by such a profound study of the master, as a whole, as may place him in the light of the greatest of *suggestive* poets, instead of one whose details are to be enfeebled by a literal transcript.

We have little of importance left to notice before we reach the close of the eighteenth century, about which period we ought to rest. Opinions upon our contemporaries, except very general ones, would be as imprudent as misplaced. Perhaps we should notice in a few words the extraordinary forgeries of William Henry Ireland. We consider them as the result of the all-engrossing character of Shaksperean opinion in the days of the rivalries and controversies of Steevens and Malone, of Ritson and Chalmers : —

“ Take Markham’s Armoury, John Taylor’s Sculler,
 Or Sir Giles Goosecap, or proverbial Fuller ;
 With Upton, Fabell, Dodypoll the nice,
 Or Gibbe our cat, White Devils, or Old Vice ;
 Then lead your readers many a precious dance,
 Capering with Banks’s ‘ Bay Horse in a Trance :’
 The ‘ Housewife’s Jewel ’ read with care exact,
 Wit from old Books of Cookery extract ;
 Thoughts to stew’d prunes and kissing comfits suit,
 Or the potato, vigour-stirring root ;
 And then, returning from that antique waste,
 Be hall’d by Parr the Guide of Public Taste.” *

A clever boy, who had a foolish father whose admiration of Shakspeare took the form of longing, with an intensity which Mrs. Pickle could not have equalled, for the smallest scraps of Shakspeare’s writing, thought he would try his hand at the manufacture of a few such scraps—a receipt; a mortgage-deed; a Protestant Confession of Faith by William Shakspeare, to be placed in opposition to another forgery of a Roman Catholic Confession of Faith. This precious production thus concludes:—“ O cheryshe usse like the sweete Chickenne thatte under the covert offe herre spreadynge Winges Receyves herre lyttle Broode ande hoverynge overre themme keepes themme harmlesse ande in safetie.” Learned men came to read the confession of faith, and one affirmed that it was finer than anything in the Church Liturgy. Witty conundrums succeeded; letters to Anne Hath-

away; memorandums connected with the theatre; a new edition of *King Lear*, with the author's last alterations; and, to crown the whole, an original play, "*Vortigern and Rowena*." The boy was evidently imbued with the taste of his time, and really fancied that he could mend Shakspeare. Hear one of his confessions:—"In *King Lear* the following lines are spoken by Kent after the King's death:—

'I have a journey, sir, shortly to go:
My master calls, and I must not say no.'

As I did not conceive such a jingling and unmeaning couplet very appropriate to the occasion, I composed the following lines:—

'Thanks, sir; but I go to that unknown land
That chains each pilgrim fast within its soil;
By living men most shunn'd, most dreaded.
Still my good master this same journey took:
He calls me; I am content, and straight obey:
Then, farewell, world! the busy scene is done:
Kent liv'd most true, Kent dies most like a man.'

The documents were published in the most expensive form. All the critics in the land came to look upon the originals. Some went upon their knees and kissed them. The "black-letter dogs" began to tear each other in pieces about their authenticity. Hard names were given and returned; dunce and blockhead were the gentlest vituperations. The whole controversy turned upon the colour of the ink, the water-mark of the paper,

the precise mode of superscription to a letter, the contemporary use of a common word, the date of the first use of promissory notes, the form of a mortgage. Scarcely one of the learned went boldly to the root of the imposture, and showed that Shakspeare could not have written such utter trash. The case of Chatterton was altogether a different one. There, indeed, was high genius wrongfully employed; but the enthusiastic admiration of the thing produced might well shut the eyes of the most acute to the inconsistencies which surrounded it. Not so with the new treasures which William Henry Ireland discovered from the pen of Shakspeare. The *people*, however, settled the question. The play was brought out at Drury Lane: and the prologue by Sir James Bland Burgess is another instance of the mode in which the poetasters and witlings venerated Shakspeare:—

“ From deep oblivion snatch'd, this play appears :
 It claims respect, since Shakspeare's name it bears ;
 That name, the source of wonder and delight,
 To a fair hearing has at least a right.
 We ask no more. With you the judgment lies
 No forgeries escape your piercing eyes !
 Unbiass'd, then, pronounce your dread decree,
 Alike from prejudice or favour free.
 If, the fierce ordeal pass'd, you chance to find
 Rich sterling ore, *though rude and unrefin'd*,
 Stamp it your own, assert your poet's fame,
 And add fresh wreaths to Shakspeare's honour'd name.”

The people did pronounce their “dread decree.”
 When Mr. Kemble uttered the line—

“ And when this solemn mockery is o’er ” —

“ the most discordant howl echoed from the pit that ever assailed the organs of hearing.” Shakspeare was vindicated.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century a new school of criticism began to establish itself amongst us. Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt led the way in approaching Shakspeare, if not wholly in the spirit of *Æsthetics*, yet with love, with deep knowledge, with surpassing acuteness, with unshackled minds. But a greater arose. A new era of critical opinion upon Shakspeare, as propounded by Englishmen, may be dated from the delivery of the lectures of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, at the Surrey Institution, in 1814. What that great man did for Shakspeare during the remainder of his valuable life can scarcely be appreciated by the public. For his opinions were not given to the world in formal treatises and ponderous volumes. They were fragmentary; they were scattered, as it were, at random; many of them were the oral lessons of that wisdom and knowledge which he poured out to a few admiring disciples. But they have had their effect. For ourselves, personally, we owe a debt of gratitude to that illustrious man that can never be repaid. If, during the progress of this edition, we have been enabled to present Shakspeare to the popular mind under new aspects, looking at him from a central point, which should permit us, however imperfectly, to comprehend something of his won-

drous system, we owe the desire so to understand him ourselves to the germs of thought which are scattered through the works of that philosopher; to whom the homage of future times will abundantly compensate for the partial neglect of his contemporaries. We desire to conclude this outline of the opinions of others upon the works of Shakspeare, in connexion with the imperfect expression of our own sense of those opinions, with the name of —

COLERIDGE.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE CHRONOLOGY OF SHAKSPERE'S PLAYS.

THE order in which the thirty-six plays contained in the folio of 1623 are presented to the reader is contained in the following list, which forms a leaf of that edition :—

“ A CATALOGUE OF THE SEVERAL COMEDIES, HISTORIES, AND TRAGEDIES CONTAINED IN THIS VOLUME.

Comedies.

The Tempest.
The Two Gentlemen of Verona.
The Merry Wives of Windsor.
Measure for Measure.
The Comedy of Errors.
Much Ado about Nothing.
Love's Labour's Lost.
Midsummer Night's Dream.
The Merchant of Venice.
As You Like It.
The Taming of the Shrew.
All's Well that Ends Well.
Twelfth Night, or What You Will.
The Winter's Tale.

Histories.

The Life and Death of King John.
The Life and Death of King Richard II.
The First Part of King Henry IV.
The Second Part of King Henry IV.
The Life of King Henry V.

The First Part of King Henry VI.
The Second Part of King Henry VI.
The Third Part of King Henry VI.
The Life and Death of Richard III.
The Life of King Henry VIII.

Tragedies.

Troilus and Cressida.
The Tragedy of Coriolanus.
Titus Andronicus.
Romeo and Juliet.
Timon of Athens.
The Life and Death of Julius Cæsar.
The Tragedy of Macbeth.
The Tragedy of Hamlet.
King Lear.
Othello, the Moor of Venice.
Antony and Cleopatra.
Cymbeline, King of Britain."

The general division here given of the plays into three classes is manifestly a discriminating and a just one. The editors were thoroughly cognizant of the distinction which Shakspeare drew between his Histories and Tragedies, as works of art. Subsequent editors have not so accurately seen this distinction; for they have inserted "Macbeth" immediately after the Comedies, and preceding "King John," as if it were a History, taking its place in the chronological order of events. It will be observed also that the original editors had a just regard to the order of events in their arrangement of the Histories, properly so called. But the order of succession in the Comedies and Tragedies must

be considered an arbitrary one. Subsequent editors have introduced an order still more arbitrary; and to Malone belongs the credit of having endeavoured to place the Comedies and Tragedies in the order in which he supposed them to have been written. This arrangement took place in his posthumous edition; but, his preliminary notices to each play consisting of the various opinions of the commentators generally, the advantage of considering each with reference to the supposed epoch of its production was very imperfectly attained in that edition. We therefore resolved, previous to the commencement of our "Pictorial Edition," to establish in our own minds certain principles, which should become to us a general guide, as to the order in which we should publish the Comedies and Tragedies; still however keeping the classes separate, and not mixing them, according to their supposed dates, as Malone had done. But we did not pretend, nor even desire, to establish an exact date for the original production of each play. We attempted only to obtain a general notion of the date of their production in several groups. There would of course occur, with reference to each play, some detailed investigation, which would exhibit facts having a tendency to approximate that play to a particular year; but we knew, and we have subsequently shown, that, with very few exceptions indeed, the confident chronological orders of Malone, and Chalmers, and Drake, have been

little more than guesses, sometimes ingenious and plausible, but oftener unsatisfactory and almost childish. But it appeared to us that there were certain broad principles to be kept in view, which would offer no inconsiderable assistance in forming a just estimate of the growth of the poet's powers, and of his peculiarities of thought and style at different periods of his life. It is obvious that upon some such estimate as this, however imperfect, much that is most valuable in any critical analysis of his works, and especially in any comparison with the works of his contemporaries, must in a large degree depend. The general views which we have taken differ considerably from those of our predecessors; and they do so for the most part, because we have more facts to guide us,—and especially the one fact that he was established in London, as a shareholder in the leading company of players, as early as the year 1589. We begin, therefore, by assuming that he was a writer for the stage five years at least before the period usually assigned for the commencement of his career as a dramatic poet. It may be convenient here briefly to recapitulate the reasons of this opinion which we have stated in various passages of our previous edition.

We shall first present an Abstract of Malone's last Chronological Order, as a case upon which to ground our argument.

	Poet's Age.
1. First Part of King Henry VI. - 1589	25
2. Second Part of King Henry VI. - 1591	27
3. Third Part of King Henry VI. - 1591	
4. Two Gentlemen of Verona - 1591	28
5. Comedy of Errors - - - 1592	
6. King Richard II. - - - 1598	29
7. King Richard III. - - - 1593	
8. Love's Labour's Lost - - - 1594	30
9. Merchant of Venice - - - 1594	
10. Midsummer Night's Dream - 1594	32
11. Taming of the Shrew - - - 1596	
12. Romeo and Juliet - - - 1596	33
13. King John - - - - 1596	
14. First Part of King Henry IV. - 1597	35
15. Second Part of King Henry IV. - 1599	
16. As You like It - - - - 1599	36
17. King Henry V. - - - - 1599	
18. Much Ado about Nothing - - 1600	37
19. Hamlet - - - - - 1600	
20. Merry Wives of Windsor - - 1601	38
21. Troilus and Cressida - - - 1602	
22. Measure for Measure - - - 1603	39
23. Henry VIII. - - - - 1603	
24. Othello - - - - - 1604	40
25. Lear - - - - - 1605	
26. All's Well that Ends Well - - 1606	42
27. Macbeth - - - - - 1606	
28. Julius Cæsar - - - - - 1607	43
29. Twelfth Night - - - - - 1607	
30. Antony and Cleopatra - - - 1608	44
31. Cymbeline - - - - - 1609	
32. Coriolanus - - - - - 1610	46
33. Timon of Athens - - - - - 1610	
34. Winter's Tale - - - - - 1611	47
35. Tempest - - - - - 1611	
36. Pericles - - - - -	Omitted as doubtful.
37. Titus Andronicus - - - -	

In 1598 Francis Meres published his "*Palladis Tamia, Wit's Treasury*," which contains the most important notice of Shakspeare of any contemporary writer: — "As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for comedy and tragedy among the Latins, so Shakespeare, among the English, is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage: for comedy, witness his 'Gentlemen of Verona,' his 'Errors,' his 'Love Labours Lost,' his 'Love Labours Won,' his 'Mid-summer's Night Dream,' and his 'Merchant of Venice;' for tragedy, his 'Richard II.,' 'Richard III.,' 'Henry IV.,' 'King John,' 'Titus Andronicus,' and his 'Romeo and Juliet.'"

This notice fixes the date of thirteen plays, as having been produced up to 1598. But this list can scarcely be supposed to be a complete one. The expression which Meres uses, "for comedy *witness*," implies that he selects particular examples of excellence. We know that the three Parts of "Henry VI." existed before 1598: we believe that "The Taming of the Shrew" was amongst the early plays; and that the original sketch of "Hamlet" had been produced at the very outset of Shakspeare's dramatic career. "All's Well that Ends Well," we believe, also, to have been an early play, known to Meres as "Love's Labour's Won." But carry the list of Meres forward two years, and we have to add 'Much Ado about Nothing' and "Henry V." which were then *printed*. The account, therefore, stands thus in 1600: —

Plays mentioned by Meres, considering "Henry IV."						
as Two Parts	-	-	-	-	-	13
Henry VI., Three Parts	-	-	-	-	-	3
Taming of the Shrew	}	-	-	-	-	2
Hamlet (sketch)						
Much Ado about Nothing	}	-	-	-	-	2
Henry V.						

—
20

We have now seventeen plays, including "Pericles," left for the seventeenth century ; but some of these have established their claim to an earlier date than has been usually assigned to them. "Twelfth Night" and "Othello" were performed in 1602. Under the usual chronological order we are compelled, according to the analysis which we have just given, to crowd twenty plays into ten years. We shall have a still more difficult task to accomplish, if we accept the theory which has been laid down, by an authority which goes further even than Malone, that all "dramatic poets who had written plays prior to the years 1593 may be fairly considered the predecessors of Shakspeare *," assuming that previous to 1593 Shakspeare was altogether employed in mending the plays of others. But, putting aside "Titus Andronicus," Meres gives us a list of twelve original plays existing when his book was printed in 1598 — twelve plays which we would not exchange for all the contemporary dramatic literature produced in the years between 1593 and

* Collier's "Annals of the Stage." vol. i. p. 237.

1598. In support of these assertions, and these computations, not the slightest direct evidence has ever been offered. The indirect evidence constantly alleged against Shakspeare being a writer before he was twenty-seven years old is that he had obtained no reputation, and is not even mentioned by any contemporary, previously to the satirical notice of him in the last production of Robert Greene, who died in September, 1592, in which he is called "the only Shakespeare in the country." The very terms used by Greene would imply that the successful author of whom he was envious had acquired a reputation. But this is not the usual construction put on the words. The silence of other writers with regard to Shakspeare is minutely set forth by Malone; and his opinions, as it appears to us, have been much too implicitly received, — sometimes indolently, — sometimes for the support of a theory that would recognise Shakspeare as a mere actor, or, at most, as the repairer of other men's works, — whilst the original genius of Marlowe, and half a dozen inferior writers, was in full activity around him. The omission of all notice of Shakspeare by Webbe, Puttenham, Harrington, Sidney, are brought forward by Malone as unquestionable proofs that our poet had not written before 1591 or 1592. He says that in Webbe's "Discourse of English Poetry," published in 1586, we meet with the names of the most celebrated poets of that time, particu-

larly those of the dramatic writers Whetstone and Munday ; but that we find no trace of Shakspeare or of his works. But Malone does not tell us that Webbe makes a general apology for his omissions, saying, " Neither is my abiding in such place where I can with facility get knowledge of their works." " Three years afterwards," continues Malone, " Puttenham printed his ' Art of English Poesy ; ' and in that work also we look in vain for the name of Shakspeare." The book speaks of the one-and-thirty years' space of Elizabeth's reign ; and thus puts the date of the writing a year earlier than the printing. But we here look in vain for some other illustrious names besides that of Shakspeare. Malone has not told us that the *name* of Edmund Spenser is not found in Puttenham ; nor, what is still more uncandid, that not one of Shakspeare's early dramatic contemporaries is mentioned — neither Marlowe, nor Greene, nor Peele, nor Kyd, nor Lyly. The author evidently derives his knowledge of " poets and poesy " from a much earlier period than that in which he publishes. He does not mention Spenser by *name*, but he does " that other gentleman who wrote the late ' Shepherd's Calendar.' " The " Shepherd's Calendar," of Spenser was published in the year 1579. Malone goes on to argue that the omission of Shakspeare's name, or any notice of his works, in Sir John Harrington's " Apology of Poetry," printed in 1591, in which " he takes occasion to

speaking of the theatre, and mentions some of the celebrated dramas of that time," is a proof that none of Shakspeare's dramatic compositions had then appeared. The "celebrated dramas" which Harrington mentions are Latin plays, and an old London comedy called "Play of the Cards." Does he mention "Tamburlaine," or "Faustus," or "The Massacre of Paris," or "The Jew of Malta?" As he does not, it may be assumed with equal justice that none of Marlowe's compositions had appeared in 1591; and yet we know that he died in 1593. So of Lyly's "Galathea," "Alexander and Campaspe," "Endymion," &c. So of Greene's "Orlando Furioso," "Friar Bacon," "James IV." So of the "Jeronimo" of Kyd. The truth is, that Harrington in his notice of celebrated dramas was even more antiquated than Puttenham; and his evidence, therefore, in this matter is utterly worthless. But Malone has given his crowning proof that Shakspeare had not written before 1591, in the following words:—"Sir Philip Sidney, in his 'Defense of Poesie,' speaks at some length of the low state of dramatic literature at the time he composed this treatise, but has not the slightest allusion to Shakspeare, whose plays, had they then appeared, would doubtless have rescued the English stage from the contempt which is thrown upon it by the accomplished writer; and to which it was justly exposed by the wretched compositions of those who proceeded our poet. 'The

Defense of Poesie ' was not published till 1595, but must have been written some years before." There is one slight objection to this argument : Sir Philip Sidney was killed at the battle of Zutphen, in the year 1586 ; and it is tolerably well ascertained that " The Defence of Poesie " was written in the year 1581.

If the indirect evidence that Shakspeare had not acquired any reputation in 1591 thus breaks down, we may venture to inquire whether the same authority has not been equally unsuccessful in rejecting the belief, which was implicitly adopted by Dryden and Rowe, that the reputation of Shakspeare as a comic poet was distinctly recognised by Spenser in 1591.

" He, the man whom Nature self had made
To mock herself, and Truth to imitate,
With kindly counter, under mimic shade,
Our pleasant Willy, ah ! is dead of late :
With whom all joy and jolly merriment
Is also deaded, and in dolour drent.

Instead thereof scoffing Scurrillity,
And scornful Folly, with Contempt, is crept,
Rolling in rhymes of shameless ribaldry,
Without regard or due decorum kept ;
Each idle wit at will presumes to make,
And doth the Learned's task upon him take.

But that same gentle spirit, from whose pen
Large streams of honey and sweet nectar flow,
Scorning the boldness of such base-born men,
Which dare their follies forth so rashly throw,
Doth rather choose to sit in idle cell
Than so himself to mockery to sell."

Mr. Collier, in his "History of Dramatic Poetry," says of Spenser's "Thalia,"—"Had it not been certain that it was written at so early a date, and that Shakespeare *could not then* have exhibited his talents and acquired reputation, we should say at once that it could be meant for no other poet. It reads like a prophetic anticipation, which could not have been fulfilled by Shakespeare until several years after it was published." Mr. Collier, when he wrote this, had not discovered the document which proves that Shakspeare was a sharer in the Blackfriars Theatre at least a year before this poem was published. Spenser, we believe, described a real man, and real facts. He made no "prophetic anticipation;" there had been genuine comedy in existence; the ribaldry had been driven out for a season. We say, advisedly, that there is *absolutely no proof* that Shakspeare had *not* written "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," "The Comedy of Errors," "Love's Labour's Lost," "The Taming of the Shrew," and "All's Well that Ends Well," amongst his comedies, before 1590: we believe that he alone merited the high praise of Spenser; that it was meant for him.

What, then, is the theory which we build upon the various circumstances we have brought together, and which we oppose to the prevailing theory in England as to the dates of Shakspeare's works? We ask that the author of *twenty plays*, existing in 1600, which completely changed the face of

the dramatic literature of England, should be supposed to have begun to write a little earlier than the age of twenty-seven; that we should assign some few of those plays to a period antecedent to 1590. We have reason to believe that, up to the close of the sixteenth century, Shakspeare was busied as an actor as well as an author. It is something too much to expect, then, even from the fertility of his genius, occupied as he was, that he should have produced twenty plays in nine years: and it is still more unreasonable to believe that the consciousness of power which he must have possessed, should not have prompted him to enter the lists with other dramatists (whose highest productions may, without exaggeration, be stated as every way inferior to his lowest), until he had gone through a probation of six or seven years' acquaintance with the stage as an humble actor. We cannot reconcile it to probability that he who ceased to be an actor when he was forty should have been contented to have been only an actor till he was twenty-seven. We cling to the belief that Shakspeare, by commencing his career as a dramatic writer some four or five years earlier than is generally maintained, may claim, in common with his less illustrious early contemporaries, the praise of being one of the great founders of our dramatic literature, instead of being the mere follower and improver of Marlowe, and Greene, and Peele, and Kyd.

Our belief, then, as to the periods of the original

production of Shakspeare's Plays, shapes itself into something like the following arrangement:—

FIRST PERIOD, 1585 to 1593. From his 21st year to his 29th.

Titus Andronicus.

Hamlet. The first sketch.

Henry VI. Three Parts.

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

Comedy of Errors.

Love's Labour's Lost.

All's Well that Ends Well (perhaps imperfect).

Taming of the Shrew (the same).

SECOND PERIOD, 1594 to 1600. From his 30th year to his 36th.

Richard III.

Richard II.

Henry IV. Two Parts.

Henry V.

King John.

A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Romeo and Juliet.

Merchant of Venice.

Much Ado about Nothing.

Merry Wives of Windsor.

THIRD PERIOD, 1601 to 1607. From his 37th year to his 43rd.

As You Like it.

Twelfth Night.

Measure for Measure.

Hamlet (complete).

Othello.

Lear.

Macbeth.

Timon of Athens (probably revision of an earlier play).

FOURTH PERIOD, 1608 to 1616. From his 44th year to his death.

Cymbeline (probably revision of an earlier play).¹

A Winter's Tale.

Pericles (probably revision of an earlier play).

The Tempest.

Troilus and Cressida.

Henry VIII.

Coriolanus.

Julius Cæsar.

Antony and Cleopatra.

There is another view in which the chronological order of Shakspeare's plays may be regarded : and we think that it presents a key to the workings of his genius, in connexion with that desire which men of the highest genius only entertain, when a constant succession of new productions is demanded of them by the popular appetite,—namely, to generalize their works by certain principles of art, producing *novel* combinations ; which principles impart to groups of them belonging to the same period a corresponding identity. In Shakspeare this is to be regarded more especially with reference to the nature of the dramatic action. We put down these groups, rather as materials for thought in the reader, than as a decided expression of our own conviction ; because, all such circumstances and relations must be modified by other facts of which we have an incomplete knowledge.

THE TRAGEDY OF HORRORS.

Titus Andronicus	} Earliest period;— 1585 to '1588.
Hamlet. First sketch	
Romeo and Juliet. First sketch *	

ENGLISH HISTORY.

Of a Tragic Cast.

Henry VI. Three Parts	} Second early pe- riod ; — 1589 to 1593.
Richard III.	
Richard II.	

Of Mixed Tragedy and Comedy.

King John	} 1596 to 1599 ;— middle period.
Henry IV. Two Parts	
Henry V.	

COMEDY.

Two Gentlemen of Verona	} Second early pe- riod ; — 1589 to 1593.
Comedy of Errors	
Love's Labour's Lost	
All's Well that Ends Well	
Taming of the Shrew	
Midsummer Night's Dream	} 1594 to 1599 ; middle period.
Merchant of Venice	
Much Ado about Nothing	
Merry Wives of Windsor	
Twelfth Night	
Romeo and Juliet (complete)	

THE TRAGEDY OF PASSION AND CHARACTER.

Hamlet (complete)	} First matured pe- riod ; — 1600 to 1608.
Othello	
Lear	
Macbeth	

* Our reasons for considering the first "Hamlet" and "Romeo and Juliet" to belong to this class are given in a notice of the authenticity of "Titus Andronicus."

THE POETICAL LEGENDARY TALE, OR ROMANTIC
 DRAMA.

As You Like It	}	First matured pe- riod ; — 1600 to 1608.
Cymbeline		
Winter's Tale		
Tempest		
Pericles		

TRAGI-COMEDY.

Measure for Measure	}	Second matured period; — 1609 to 1615.
Trollus and Cressida		
Timon of Athens		

ROMAN PLAYS.

Coriolanus	}	Second matured period; — 1609 to 1615.
Julius Cæsar		
Antony and Cleopatra		
Henry VIII.		

We subjoin a Chronological Table of Shakspere's Plays, which we have constructed with some care, showing the *positive* facts which determine the dates *previous* to which they were produced.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF SHAKSPERE'S PLAYS.

HENRY VI., Part I.	. . .	Alluded to by Nashe in "Pierce Pennilesse."	1592
HENRY VI., Part II.	. . .	Printed as "The First Part of the Contention."	1594
HENRY VI., Part III.	. . .	Printed as "The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York."	1595
RICHARD II.	. . .	Printed . . .	1597
RICHARD III.	. . .	Printed . . .	1597
ROMEO AND JULIET	. . .	Printed . . .	1597
LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST	. . .	Printed . . .	1598
HENRY IV., Part I.	. . .	Printed . . .	1598
HENRY IV., Part II.	. . .	Printed . . .	1600
HENRY V.	. . .	Printed . . .	1600
MERCHANT OF VENICE	. . .	Printed 1600. Mentioned by Meres.	1598

300 CHRONOLOGY OF SHAKSPERE'S PLAYS.

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM .	Printed 1600. Mentioned by Meres.	1598
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING .	Printed	1600
AS YOU LIKE IT	Entered at Stationers' Hall.	1600
ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.	Held to be mentioned by Meres as "Love's Labour's Won."	1598
TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA .	Mentioned by Meres	1598
COMEDY OF ERRORS	Mentioned by Meres	1598
KING JOHN	Mentioned by Meres	1598
TITUS ANDRONICUS	Printed	1600
MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR .	Printed	1602
HAMLET	Printed	1603
TWELFTH NIGHT	Acted in the Middle Temple Hall.	1602
OTHELLO	Acted at Harefield	1602
MEASURE FOR MEASURE . . .	Acted at Whitehall	1604
LEAR	Printed 1608. Acted at Whitehall.	1607
TAMING OF THE SHREW	Supposed to have been acted at Henslow's Theatre, 1594. Entered at Stationers' Hall.	1607
TROILUS AND CRESSIDA	Printed 1609. Previously acted at Court.	1609
PERICLES	Printed	1609
THE TEMPEST	Acted at Whitehall	1611
THE WINTER'S TALE	Acted at Whitehall	1611
HENRY VIII.	Acted as a new play when the Globe was burned.	1613

. Out of the thirty-seven Plays of Shakspeare, the dates of thirty-one are thus to some extent fixed in epochs. These dates are, of course, to be modified by other circumstances, which are stated in our introductory notice to each Play. There are only six Plays remaining, whose dates are not thus limited by publication, by the notice of contemporaries, or by the record of their performance; and these certainly belong to the poet's latter period. They are

MACBETH,	TIMON OF ATHENS,	ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA,
CYMBELINE,	JULIUS CÆSAR,	CORIOLANUS.

END OF THE INTRODUCTORY VOLUME.